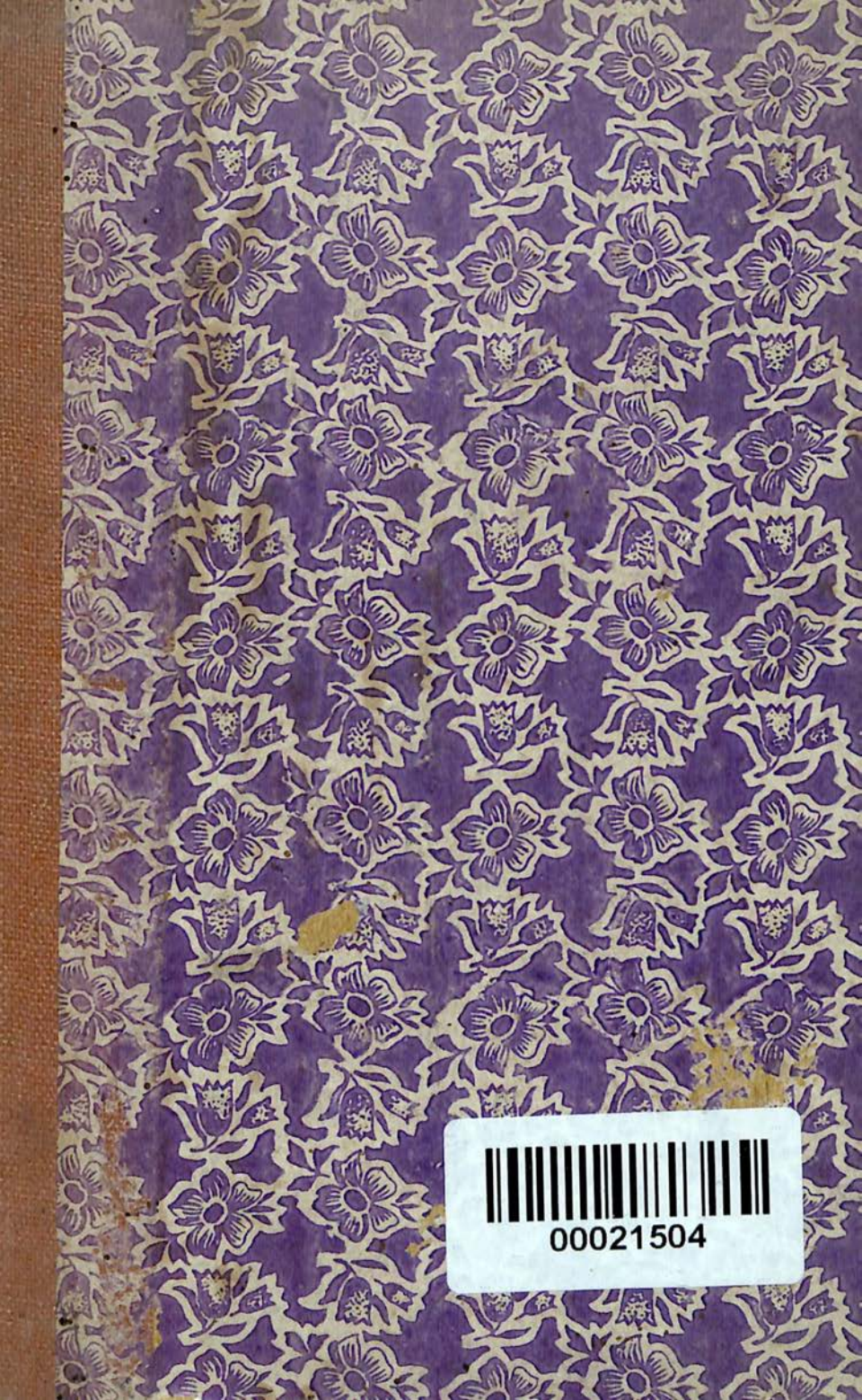
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SANSON'S MEMOIRS.

VOL. I.

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MEMOIRS OF THE SANSONS

From Private Notes and Documents.

[1688-1847.]

EDITED BY

HENRY SANSON,

LATE EXECUTIONER OF THE COURT OF JUSTICE OF PARIS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

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London:

CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY.

1876.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

IN PRESENTING this English version of the condensed memoirs of Henry Sanson and his family, a few prefatory remarks from the Translator are necessary.

Several years have now passed since this work was issued in French in Paris. Its appearance excited far more curiosity than the records of an ordinary executioner could have commanded. In fact the author was a personage in his own way. He was the lineal descendant of a race of headsmen through whose hands every State victim, as well as every common criminal, had passed during two centuries. They had exercised their functions for nearly two hundred years. They had hung, beheaded, quartered, and tortured from father to son without interruption, and the social position of the first of the race, previous to the assumption of the executioner's office, had placed his descendants on a somewhat higher level than the men belonging to the bloody profession. It was thought by all, that the last of the Sansons could not but have interesting things to relate. It is for the readers

of the present version to decide whether this idea was justified.

Howbeit, these memoirs are chiefly conspicuous for their historical interest. This alone would entitle them to a peculiar place. They certainly cannot be classed in the literature of horrors, and the Translator may be permitted to say that, had his opinion been different, he would not have put his pen at the service of such work. A certain amount of morbidness is obviously inseparable from a book of such a kind; but this, which the Translator has endeavoured to palliate, is redeemed by the constant link which unites the dark tales Sanson has to unfold with historical dramas.

The Translator has no sympathy for Sanson or his book, and he claims none for him. He may even say, without prejudicing these memoirs, that he credits neither the Executioner's emphatic and sentimental expressions of hatred for the principle he represents, nor the manifold virtues Sanson ascribes to his ancestors. He finds, as everybody must do, difficulty in believing that an individual need cut heads when he is compelled to do so neither by necessity nor by law, and Sanson's lamentations have left him unshaken in his belief.

But authenticity may justly be claimed for these memoirs. After proper research and inquiry, the Translator has no reason to doubt it. Sanson was not a profound scholar, but he knew enough to hold a pen

and note his impressions in the crude style in which the French version is indited. That the Executioner may have received assistance is possible, though the uncouthness of his work argues against the theory; that the authorship is genuine, at least in spirit, has been proved by Sanson himself, who on several occasions publicly contradicted reports that the memoirs published under his name were fictitious. Whatever opinions may be entertained of them, they are inspired, and in all probability written by no other than the man who bore the historical name of Sanson.

It only remains for the Translator to state that wherever the 'Recollections' seemed to him to wander from the special object they have in view, he has not scrupled to abridge them.

INTRODUCTION.

On March 18, 1847, I returned to my residence from one of the long walks of which I have always been fond. I had but just crossed the threshold when the porter gave me a letter.

I immediately recognised the large envelope and seal of which the sight had even sent a thrill through my frame. I took the ominous message with a trembling hand, and expecting that it contained one of those sinister orders I was bound to obey, I entered my house and went to my study, where I broke the fatal seal.

It was My Dismissal!

A strange and indefinable sentiment took possession of me. I raised my eyes to the portraits of my ancestors; I scanned all those dark, thoughtful faces, whereon was depicted the very despair which had hitherto haunted me. I looked at my grandfather, dressed in a shooting costume, leaning on his gun and stroking his dog—perhaps the only friend he had. I looked at my father,

his hat in his hand, and clad in the sable garb he had ever worn. It seemed to me that I was informing all these dumb witnesses that there was an end of the curse which had weighed on their race. Then, ringing the bell, I asked for a basin and water; and alone with God who sees in our hearts I solemnly laved those hands which the blood of my brethren was henceforth never to soil.

I then repaired to my mother's apartment. I can still see her in her velvet armchair, from which the poor old woman seldom rose. I placed on her lap the message from the Minister of Justice. She read it, and turning towards me her kindly eyes:

'Blessed be this day, my son!' she said. 'It frees you from the inheritance of your fathers.'

And as I remained speechless with such emotion as I could not control, she added:

'It must have come to this sooner or later. You are the last of your race. Heaven has only given you daughters; I was always thankful for it.'

On the following day eighteen competitors were postulating for my bloody functions; there was no difficulty in finding a substitute.

As for myself I had but one course to follow. I hastened to sell my ancient residence, full of sad recollections, wherein three out of seven generations had lived under opprobrium and ignominy. My horses, my

carriage—which bore as a coat of arms a cracked bell—I also got rid of. In short, I gave up all that could remind me of the past; and then, shaking the dust from my feet, I bade an eternal farewell to the hereditary abode in which, as my ancestors, I had never tasted peace in day and repose in night.

But for the advanced age and the infirmities of my mother, I should have gone to the New World. It was my chief wish to place the Ocean between me and the country where I had fulfilled such dismal functions. America, with its new manners, its virgin forests, its immense rivers, of which I had read in the works of Chateaubriand and Fenimore Cooper, was the land I longed to see. It seemed to me that by renouncing a name that had acquired such unwelcome celebrity, I could turn a new leaf of the book of life on setting foot on American soil. But I was bound by duty to abide in Paris. My aged mother would have insisted on accompanying me, and her strength must have been unequal to the fatigues of a sea voyage. I therefore remained with her to watch her and close her eyes which had shed so many bitter tears.

I was called upon only too soon to perform this sacred duty. Less than three years after my removal from the office of public executioner I had the grief to witness the death of the worthy and venerable woman who had given me, besides life, the benefit of her wise

advice and the example of her virtues. This was a sad blow for me, and it lay on my mind a long time. Time wiled away; I became too advanced in years to cultivate the illusion of a new life. I was fain to give up my scheme of emigration.

However, I hastened to quit Paris, and I made choice of a retreat so safe and so secluded that nothing ever came to remind me of the melancholy occupation of my former life. I have lived there for twelve years under a name which is not mine, reaping with something like secret shame the friendship and good-will which I constantly fear to see dispelled by the discovery of my former avocations. But in this obscure shelter whither I had fled from my recollections, the past recurs to my memory with extraordinary lucidity; and, old as I am now, weary of a bleak and vain life, I have yielded to the strongest of temptations, that of writing the book of which these pages form the preface.

Idleness and solitude are no safe resorts for a morbid imagination. Constantly troubled with thoughts bearing on the predestination of my birth, on the first occupation of my life, my mind wandered back to the time of the adventure, to be told hereafter, by which a bequest, which, thank Heaven, I have transmitted to none of mine, came into my family.** I remembered the line of ancestors among whom even a child of seven years was bound to the scaffold. My great-grandfather,

Charles Jean-Baptiste, born in Paris on April 19, 1719, succeeded to his father on October 2, 1726; and as so young a child could not possibly discharge the functions of executioner, the Parliament supplied him with an assistant and instructor named Prudhomme, but ordered that the child should sanction executions by his presence. A strange thing, indeed, was this regency in the history of the scaffold.

I thought of my grandfather, who had been compelled to wield the axe and the knife on the head of King, Queen, nobles, and *révolutionnaires* during the French Revolution. I had seen, in my youth, the hale figure of the old man. He had written a daily record of his terrible occupations; thus continuing the register in which my ancestors had inscribed the doings of our race.

In reading those singular annals, which, in my turn, I continued, and which begin by the Chamber of Torture and the *poudre de succession*, then dwell on the saturnalias of the Regency and of Louis XV.'s reign, and come to a conclusion in our century after passing through the French Revolution, I have found curious recollections at almost every page, anecdotes of the time, accounts of traditions carefully preserved in my family, a chaos of illustrious and abject names—the Count de Horn between Poulailler and Cartouche; Lally-Tollendal, and the Chevalier de la Barre next to Damiens; and

then, with a king as leader, the *cortége* of the victims of the Revolution. I was reminded of my conversations with my father concerning the Infernal Machine devised under the first Empire, the conspiracy of Georges Cadoudal, the Companions of Jehu, the Chauffeurs, &c.; and I also bore in mind the dramas in which it was my lot to take a part, the condemnation of the four Sergeants of La Rochelle, that of Louvel and of all the disciples of Jacques Clément, and Ravaillac, who vainly attempted to murder Louis Philippe. There was also the execution of Lesurques, the victim of a judicial mistake, and a more recent gang of the worst class of criminals, Papavoine, Castaing, Lacenaire, Soufflard, Poulmann. It struck me that in all this there was matter for a work whereof the interest and utility might in some degree conceal the individuality of the author.

I have therefore written the present book, appending to it a sketch of punishments in France, and an account of the office of Executioner. This book I now publish. If it had for purpose to furnish food for the unhealthy curiosity of people who would seek emotions in a kind of written photograph of the scenes that take place on the scaffold, it should be received with loathsomeness; but I would rather burn my writings than follow a course so contrary to my object. Far from this, I have been actuated in the course of my work by an abhorrence for the punishment denounced by so

many eloquent voices, the punishment of which I have had the misfortune to be the living impersonation. And now if it is asked how, with such sentiments, I could discharge so long my functions of headsman, I will merely refer the reader to the singular circumstances attendant on my birth. When I was yet a boy it was my bane to help my father; I was, as it were, brought up in the profession of my ancestors, and taught that I must abide by it as a matter of course. The sword of the law was transmitted from generation to generation in my family, as the sceptre in royal races. Could I select another calling without insulting my family and the old age of my father? I retained my office so long as was consistent with my wish to spare the feelings of my dearest kinsmen; and as soon as I could do so I gladly gave them up. All that I care for now is that in a short lapse of time those who read these pages may say, in putting down the book, that it is the will of capital punishment written by the last Executioner,

HENRY SANSON.

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MEMOIRS OF THE SANSONS.

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN OF MY FAMILY.

My family came from one of the most ancient stocks in France. I heard from my grandfather that, having visited Milan, he discovered in the Ambrosian Library a number of documents in which a Sanson was mentioned as being Seneschal of the Duke of Normandy, better known as Robert the Devil, and as having joined a Crusade to the Holy Land. My grandfather was extremely fond of historical and archæological studies; he assured us that all the ancient chroniclers whose writings he had read, Villehardouin, Guy, Martial d'Auvergne, Rigaud and Joinville, designated the Sansons as bannerets of the Dukes of Normandy; that they had seen not only the Crusades, but the Conquest of England and the expeditions of Robert Guiscard and his sons, when these heroic Neustrian adventurers fought for the Pope against the Saracens, and founded the principalities and kingdoms of Southern Italy. This is a legend; and as no family, I may almost say no

nation, can possibly explain the mystery of its origin otherwise than by hypothesis and conjecture, I hasten to enter the more trustworthy demesnes of reality.

In the fifteenth century my family was established at Abbeville, and held a most honourable place in the history of the town. If I admit the accuracy of my grandfather's speculations, it seems certain that the Sansons were somewhat below their former splendour. At the time they belonged to the high and rich bourgeoisie, which was a link between the nobility and the *Tiers État*, and possessed, like the former, the privilege of serving the king, as officers, while the latter was deprived of municipal dignities and honours. Several Sansons filled the office of Échevin of Abbeville. One of the members of the family served Henry IV. throughout all his wars, and he was seriously wounded at Fontaine-Française, where the King of Béarn himself was well-nigh captured and slain by the Spanish cavalry. When the Peace of Vervins put an end to civil and foreign strife, this brave companion of the great Henry returned to his native town, and until his death, which occurred on May 31, 1593, was honoured with the esteem and veneration of his fellow-citizens. His grandson was one of the most remarkable men of the first part of the seventeenth century. His name was Nicolas Sanson. He may be said to have been one of the fathers of modern geography. Born in 1600, this illustrious man already enjoyed European fame, when Cardinal de Richelieu, who was no man to leave in a provincial town one who could help him in

his vast projects of transatlantic colonisation, assigned him a suitable pension, and honoured him with particular affection. Louis XIII. also appreciated the merit of the geographer, and Nicolas Sanson received many tokens of royal favour. The seductions of the Court, and Nicolas Sanson's connection with the most exalted personages of the time, often retained him in Paris; but the want of solitude and quiet frequently led him back to Abbeville. In 1638, when Louis XIII. entered this last town, he declined the offer of a resting place worthy of royalty, and preferred partaking of his geographer's hospitality. A King of France, a Bourbon, slept for two nights beneath the roof of a family which later was to bear a hand on another Bourbon in the name of a revolutionary law. A singular hazard indeed!

Charles Sanson de Longval, who became the first of the branch whereof I am the last representative, was the lineal descendant of Nicolas Sanson. I have now done with those of my ancestors who were men and citizens. It is time to speak of those who were headsmen.

CHAPTER II.

CHARLES SANSON DE LONGVAL.

CHARLES SANSON was born at Abbeville in 1635. His father and mother died when he was still in the cradle. He had a brother, Jean-Baptiste Sanson, who was born in 1624, and was therefore eleven years older than he. Their uncle, Pierre Brossier, sire of Limeuse, took the orphans under his protection. His kindness and tenderness greatly alleviated the melancholy of their situation. He had a daughter named Colombe; and he gave an equal share of affection to all three. Colombe Brossier and Charles Sanson were nearly of the same age. The intimacy of childhood made the ties of blood still faster and gave rise to mutual attachment. Their friendship became love. Neither Pierre Brossier nor Jean-Baptiste Sanson had any notion of the feelings of Charles and Colombe. And on a Sunday morning the former, having announced that he had just obtained for Jean-Baptiste the office of Councillor at the Court of Abbeville, informed his daughter that the new councillor sued her hand, and that he (Pierre Brossier) highly approved of the match—in fact, that this marriage had been one

of his long cherished projects, and that the sooner it was accomplished the better.

In those times, more than in ours, a father's will was law, and no other course but to submit was left to Colombe Brossier. Much against her wishes she was wedded to Jean-Baptiste a short time after. As to Charles Sanson, his grief was so deep that he resolved to leave Europe. He left his relation, went to Rochefort, and embarked for Quebec, where he was received by one of his father's sisters, who resided there. His affection, however, seems to have resisted the test of travels and novel sights, for he constantly refused to see again his native country, and only returned to France after the death of his brother Jean-Baptiste, and of his wife Colombe, which occurred a few years after his departure. Charles Sanson was by this time familiar with almost every part of the world; he had seen the West Indies, the whole of America and the Levant; but his disappointed affection had brought on a dark mood and a bitterness which became chronic, and he regarded the world in anything but a sympathetic disposition.

Shortly after his return to France, Charles Sanson betook himself to arms, the military profession being generally adopted by gentlemen of his station. He bought a commission in the regiment of the Marquis de Laboissière, took part in the battle of Gravelines and other encounters, and, under his full name of Charles de Longval, acquired in his regiment a reputation for great proficiency and courage. It was in 1662 that happened the strange adventure which led to his falling from his

high position to the degrading functions he transmitted to his descendants. I will now let him speak for himself, and give his manuscript account with its primitive orthography and roughness.

Manuscript of Charles Sanson.[1]

God, in His infinite goodness, measured on our shoulders the cross He wished us to bear; there is no misfortune, however heavy, to which one cannot be reconciled; and what at first appears to us as impossible for a man to accomplish as it is for him to swallow all the waters of the ocean, comes to pass by the mere strength of habit. After entering into rebellion against my fate, I have been led to suffer patiently the evil I did not deserve as well as the consequences of my imprudence, praying that my death should be less tainted than my life. But although children only subsist by the will of their parents, although they owe to them life and education, I apprehend that mine, before the singular difference they must find between their existence and that which they had a right to hope for at my hands, will murmur against their father; and before asking for God's mercy, I wish to confess my sins, and to state the reasons that led me to adopt the miserable profession of executioner, so that they may forgive me if I deserve forgiveness; and on Thursday, the eleventh day of December, in the year of our Lord one thousand six hundred and ninety-three, have I begun this confession.

[1] This singular document was written in archaic French.

My greatest misfortune was always to give to my passions supreme control over my will, and thus to render myself unworthy of the indulgence of the Lord, who, nevertheless, attempted more than once to guard me against the abyss whither I was running headlong.

A great affliction befell me in my youth; but far from struggling against it, and counteracting it by reason, penance and prayer, I found so much satisfaction in retaining the recollection of a passionate love that I would rather have given up my life than the remembrance of my folly; and thus I opened my mind to all the violent resolutions it pleased my heart to dictate to it.

In the year 1662 I was a lieutenant in the regiment of Monsieur le Marquis de Laboissière, which, after taking part in the campaign undertaken in 1658 under Monsieur le Vicomte de Turenne, in the course of which Bergues, Furnes and Graveline were taken, was quartered in the town of Dieppe.

In the month of July of the year 1662 the help of God had been very apparent in my favour; but while the Lord was freeing me from a dangerous peril for my soul, the eternal enemy of our salvation was leading me into another misadventure.

One day my life was much imperilled by a fall from my horse. I was carried to the abode of a poor man who lived in a house called the Clos-Mauduit, situate outside the walls of the town of Dieppe, beyond the cemetery, on the road of Neufchastel. This man behaved to me as the good Samaritan; he washed and dressed

my wounds, and only sent me away when I was cured. But I caught in his house an illness more serious than that which had brought me thither; I left it enamoured with a girl named Marguerite, who was my host's only daughter.

At first I tried not to think of her. Although the real profession of Marguerite's father was not known to me, it was obvious that he was of low condition; and being unable to marry the girl, I could not think of harming the daughter of a man who had been so kind to me. But the intentions of men are mere phantoms, and in spite of myself, I beheld night and day the image of the creature I upbraided myself for thinking of.

Soon after this, one of my cousins, named Paul Bertauld, came to Dieppe on business matters, being one of those who held the French possessions of India before the king, our sire, bought them for the benefit of the country. Although I disliked men on account of the misfortunes I had suffered on their account, and I preferred solitude to their society, I was very friendly to Paul Bertauld, whom I had known as a boy in the town of Quebec, when I went there on the king's vessels. Now, although Paul knew not the real reason of my melancholy and sullen humour, he tried to amuse me, and to find recreation for my behoof, both in his company and in that of a certain M. Valvins de Blignac, who, like me, held a lieutenancy in the regiment of the Marquis de Laboissière, and was a fine swordsman and a merry companion.

One autumn day, while we were dining together on

the sea-side, in the tavern of Isaac Crocheteu, my cousin Paul jocosely declared that before a month elapsed he would have for mistress the prettiest girl in the town of Dieppe and its suburbs. M. de Blignac, who was by nature a great flatterer, and who willingly indulged those whom he could cheat and who paid for his revels, confirmed Paul Bertauld's assurance, as if he knew the girl. Upon this I felt a sudden pang, and my heart began to throb, for I had remarked that my cousin wore the flower which bore the name of my beloved, and I suspected that he did so in her honour. It was folly in me, since, in result of my first love, I had vowed only to love God; neither had I seen Marguerite since my departure from her father's house; and moreover, Dieppe and its suburbs contained more than one girl called Marguerite, to whom my cousin's compliment might apply. But yielding, as it were, to a stronger will than mine, I left the table, and, pretending that I had business at the town castle, I left my companions, took the Braacquemont path, and arrived at the Clos-Mauduit, on the road of Neufchastel, where I had not been since the accident that had befallen me.

When I saw Marguerite's house through the trees of the garden, I had a mind to return; but, although I duly censured myself, I could not help advancing. I had seen her aged father twice; after curing me, he had forbidden me to return to his house, with all sorts of violent threats, which I attributed to his apprehension that I should make love to his pretty daughter. I therefore avoided the door, for fear he should

make her pay for my indiscretion; I went round the hedge, and, catching sight of her in the garden, I jumped over the enclosure and ran up to her. Falsehoods are easily devised and told by lovers. So I told the girl that, being unable to thank her father on account of his roughness, I wished to thank her in his place for his former kindness; and then, without any preparation, and as if I could not hasten too much to speak out, so fearful was I of being forestalled by some one else, I confessed my love to her.

The girl blushed, but was not angry; but I soon perceived that her eyes were full of tears, and as I asked her what made her cry, she replied that I could not love her, that my affection must bring down heavy calamities upon my head; and she ordered and beseeched me to go away, as her father might come out and see us.

Nevertheless, I remained with her for some time, repeating what I had said before; and I went back to town much disturbed. But I returned to the Clos-Mauduit on the following day, and I henceforth paid her regular visits. Sometimes I could not see her; either she was walking with her father in the garden, or the servant was there, so that I was obliged to keep back and look at her from a distance. Sometimes, however, she was alone, and however short our conversation I always went away more in love with Marguerite. And in truth this, my second folly, transcended the first one in vehemence. It was in vain that I blamed myself; in vain that I sought strength to resist in the recollection of my former lady-love.

Marguerite in no way encouraged my affection. The warmer it became the more she implored me to leave her. One day I tried to steal a kiss from her; she was so angry that I obtained her forgiveness with difficulty. Of course I had forgotten my cousin Paul and his boast.

One evening, however, as I was drinking with M. de Blignac, who was well-nigh tipsy, and I was laughing at him, and telling him that he could only cut a sorry figure in Paul's love adventure, if it happened, he winked knowingly and replied that, thanks to him, my cousin had obtained the good graces of the prettiest girl that could be seen. As, to my idea, none could be prettier than Marguerite, I became uneasy, and assailed him with questions. He at first refused to answer; but as among the bad qualities of the Chevalier de Blignac that of being the greatest prattler in the world could be reckoned, his tongue soon began to wag. He told me that the girl was unapproachable either for love or for money, and that, by his advice, M. Paul Bertauld had bought a sleeping draught at the apothecary's, and that it was to be divided on that very evening by the valet, whom they had bribed, between the maid and the beautiful girl. He added that the father and the valet would be away all night, and that the maiden would thus remain in my cousin's absolute power.

If the tower of the church of Saint Jacques had fallen on my head, I could not have been more appalled than I was by the words of M. de Blignac. I rose so

violently that I overturned the table and the glasses. My hat and sword were on a stool. I only took the sword, and unsheathing it, I ran madly through the town. By what instinct I was guided I know not, but I made my way through the dark night as unerringly as if it had been broad daylight, and after running for half an hour I saw a light through the trees of the Clos. At the thought that it might be dawning on the poor girl's disgrace, I felt so much rage and hatred that I could have battled against twenty. As I came close to the house, I saw the shadow of a man gliding along the wall. The man took to flight when he saw me, but I was soon up with him, and I ascertained that M. de Blignac had said the truth, and that the fugitive was no other than my cousin.

I took him aside, and, filled with anger and grief, I bitterly upbraided him for his dishonest conduct, showing him that it was a crime to lead to perdition a girl as respectable as she was poor, and that by stealing her virtue he was taking all that she possessed. My cousin hung his head and was silent. If we had remained alone, I doubt not but that I could have made him repent, for his vices were rather due to youth and evil associations than to nature. Unfortunately the appearance of M. de Blignac marred my lecture. The latter when I left him had some suspicion of what was going to take place, and he arrived in great hurry. I changed my tone, and speaking to him I indignantly told him what I thought of his conduct, adding that ever since M. Bertauld's arrival he had tried to lead him into evil, inciting him

to gamble, drink and misbehave himself in all kinds of ways.

M. de Blignac answered by laughing at my cousin for suffering my remonstrances; and he swore in his own bantering way that if I acted thus it was because I had my own views concerning the girl. He added that I should apologise for what I had first said, or that he would force my words down my throat; and, drawing his sword, he assailed me, calling on my cousin to do the same, and that the girl should be theirs still. Either love must have muddled his brain, or the taunts and mockery of M. de Blignac must have stung him to the quick, for M. Paul Bertauld was shameless enough to draw his sword against his relative and friend, and to charge me while his companion was doing the same. I did my best against such odds, retreating towards the trees. While I was manœuvring thus, however, M. de Blignac made a desperate lunge, which I parried, and before he could recover his balance I wounded him so seriously in the wrist, that his sword dropped to the ground, and, having set my foot upon it, I was enabled to take it and throw it far away. On the other hand M. Paul Bertauld had been wounded, and I had also been struck in the shoulder. Fortunately my two antagonists declined to continue the duel, and retired saying that it would be daylight on the next day, and they could then begin again without fear of getting blinded. Although I saw them retreat, I nevertheless resolved to guard the house all night for fear M. de Blignac, treacherous and perverse as he was, should

advise M. Paul Bertauld to return and pursue his original design during my absence.

At midnight, hearing no stir in the house, I began to apprehend that the sleeping draught had killed the girl and the servant; and this fear was the cause of my loss. The rascally valet, according to his agreement with Bertauld, had left the door ajar. I entered the house, and went to the poor child's room. Thereupon I confess with great shame and contrition that I forgot all the good advice, counsels and lessons I had just given to my cousin. When I saw the girl whom I loved, she appeared to me so beautiful that my good intentions vanished like smoke. I was neither wiser nor more discreet than he would have been, and I committed the crime for which I had upbraided him so bitterly.

May God forgive me in another world, since I suffer in this one for my sin!

On the next day, M. Paul Bertauld's servant brought me a message from his master, requesting my attendance on the Place du Puits-Salé. Inferring that he wished to call me out, I took my sword and followed the servant. There was a numerous attendance on the Place, and I was surprised that M. Bertauld had chosen such a spot to fight a duel. When I met him, however, he showed neither spite nor rancour for what had occurred. Far from this, he offered me his hand, which I refused to take, remembering how he had joined M. de Blignac in an unfair encounter. Upon this, he showed me a scaffold which was erected in the centre of the public place. He invited me to look in that direction, which

having done, I recognised my host of the Clos in a man who was chaining a few lads to the pillory. At the same time M. Paul Bertauld said he had heard that the coveted belle was the daughter of Master Pierre Jouanne, executioner of the towns of Rouen and Dieppe, and he thanked me for taking her, having no wish, he said, to have anything to do with the offspring of an executioner.

At this I could not refrain from drawing and attacking him. But there was such a multitude around us that we were immediately separated; and I retired much grieved to my quarters.

Although Master Jouanne had always appeared to me a man of strange temper, I had never imagined that he exercised a profession for which I felt loathing and contempt. And yet, in spite of my aversion for the father, I could not help thinking that it was unjust to punish the daughter for what was the consequence of those hazards which make us the children either of a king or of a shepherd; that the beauty and virtue of Marguerite made her far more worthy to be born near a throne than on the steps of a scaffold; that it was wicked to spurn so pretty and charming a girl because of her father's horrible occupations; and then I remembered my own crime of the preceding night, and, full of shame and remorse, I wept like a child.

As it was time to go to drill, I went out still undecided. Along the road I felt certain that my acquaintances turned away from me, and when I arrived at the castle I perceived that my brother officers greeted

me more coldly than was their wont. As, however, I had never been very friendly to anyone, their manner troubled me but slightly, and I went away, after drill, in a fit of musing. After walking for some time, I found that strength of habit had led my steps to the Clos-Mauduit. Marguerite was standing on the doorstep; and even if I had wished to turn back I could not have done so without breach of manners. I went up to her, and found her so pale and wan that my contrition was greatly increased. As her father was still engaged in the town, I walked by her side in the garden, scarcely daring to speak to her, but so joyful at being near her that I retired thinking how absurd it was to forsake a creature so fascinating, and that if Master Jouanne her father broke men on the wheel, there was not a drop of blood on the hands she allowed me to kiss.

And I returned to her on the morrow, and then on every day, although she was with me as reticent as ever, and I took good care not to boast of what I had done. My love increased so rapidly that I cherished her as much as if she had been a queen's daughter. Upon this it came to my knowledge that M. Valvins de Blignac, having recovered from his wound, was spreading calumnies about me; and the result was that one morning my brother officers pretended not to see me, and did not even take off their hats as I came forth. Much incensed, I went home to my lodgings, where my servant informed me that Blignac's falsehoods were the sole cause of my misadventure. I immediately went in quest of

a second, with the purpose of calling out Blignac. But everyone declined, without even giving me a reason for refusing; and even the pettiest officers took no pains to conceal the displeasure with which my request was received. In this predicament I thought the best way was to find out my antagonist, and I was about to request the assistance of a citizen-gentleman when my servant handed me a message from M. le Marquis de Laboissière, asking for my immediate attendance.

I obeyed the summons and found the Marquis in violent anger against me. He said, with many imprecations, that, not content with transgressing the edicts of the King, our sire, concerning duels, I disgraced the regiment by my disgusting affection for the daughter of the executioner; and, without allowing me to answer, he coupled some very odious epithets with the poor girl's name, speaking of her in such terms as I dare not repeat, out of respect for her memory. Hearing which, I could not control my very irritable temper, and I retorted so harshly to a man whose age and authority I was bound to respect, that M. le Marquis de Laboissière told me to leave the room, ordering me to remain under arrest at the Castle until he had acquainted the king with my conduct. This enraged me still more. I drew my sword and, bending it over my knee, I broke it, saying he could dispense with writing to the King to deprive me of my commission, as I would tear it with my own hands, as I had first broken my sword.

I then left him, but I took care not to abide long at my quarters for fear M. le Marquis de Laboissière should

have me arrested. I took what money I possessed, saddled my horse and rode out of town in great haste. I had resolved to go northward, and to embark in some ship for India. However, I would not go without bidding farewell to my mistress. I still retained the hope of deciding her to share my lot in a country where her father's vile profession could not haunt us. . . . I therefore took the direction of the Clos-Mauduit. I was surprised to find the house in a state of darkness, for it was not late. But on minutely examining the premises, I espied rays of light issuing from the apertures of the door of a kind of shed adjoining the house, and at the same time I heard a deep groan coming from the interior of the shed.

Although not easily moved to fear, I remember that I shuddered like a leaf. I tied my horse to a tree, looked through one of the apertures, and what I saw made my hair stand on end. Marguerite, my beloved Marguerite, was stretched on the leathern bed used for the infliction of torture; her cruel father, looking more like a tiger than like a man, had placed her foot in the boot of torture; and with his own hand he was striking a spike red with his daughter's blood; at each blow he repeated with rage, 'Confess! confess!' and the poor girl, throwing herself backwards with many tears and shrieks, implored God and the saints of paradise to bear witness to her innocence.

I only saw this cruelty for a moment, for I had picked up a small beam close by, and, Heaven giving me more strength than I thought I had, I smashed the

door into splinters at a single blow, as if it had been destroyed by a mine. When he recognised me, Master Jouanne threw away his mallet, and seizing the large sword which he used to decapitate noblemen he brandished it near his daughter's head, and vowed that if I stirred in her defence he would immediately strike her head from her shoulders. I fell on my knees, crying and moaning as poor Marguerite was doing when I entered. Master Jouanne then asked me my business, and wished to know whether I brought him the name of the seducer, which he sought to obtain by torment from his daughter. I replied by confessing my fault, showing him that I alone was guilty, and not his saint-like and virtuous daughter. Hearing which, this Master Jouanne, so ferocious and so cruel, sank before the bed of torment, bursting into tears; he unloosed the boot from his daughter's leg, and taking her foot between his hands, he kissed her wounds, imploring her pardon with so much grief that his despair would have drawn tears from a rock. At the same time he deplored the misfortunes to which the poor were exposed in this world, saying that Heaven should make poor girls ugly and frightful to look at, since neither virtue nor chastity could protect them from the noble and the powerful.

At this stage, I advanced and expressed my intention of leaving my country; and I further declared that I was ready to take Marguerite for my wife and companion. Master Jouanne showed himself more moved by my proposal than he had been hitherto; but he remained firm, and, turning to his daughter, he said it was

her business to answer. The poor girl, thus questioned, took those hands which had but just done her so much violent and bloody harm, kissed them, and said that as she was her father's only companion and supporter in his solitary life, she would not leave him, even if I offered her the throne of India, whither I proposed to take her.

Master Jouanne embraced his daughter very unctuously, and then showed me the door, saying that he was an executioner, not an assassin; that he would not kill me on that day, but that I should take care not to reappear in the town or neighbourhood if I cared for my life.

I hung my head and turned away to leave; but as my foot touched the threshold I heard behind me a deep sob, and, looking round, I saw that Marguerite had fainted in her father's arms. I rushed towards her; but Master Jouanne again pushed me back very roughly. Seeing by the state of his daughter that her soul was as troubled as mine was by this separation, and discovering that she loved me as much as I could love her, nothing could induce me to retire. I therefore proposed to the father to marry Marguerite, and that we should all go to some distant land, where we could live in peace.

But my proposal was no more approved of than my preceding offer. Jouanne answered that a tardy and unavailing change of profession could not prevent his son-in-law from despising him, and from imparting his contempt to his wife; and that, since his daughter had left her fate in her father's hands, he would only consent to our union if my love was strong enough to take a

share of the opprobrium and hatred which belonged to himself and his child; that without scruple I had dishonoured the executioner's daughter; and that I could only atone for my crime by becoming an executioner myself.

. . . . . .

My ancestor's confession comes to a sudden termination. He fails to give the conclusion of his adventure, as he abstained from giving an account of the events which preceded it. Colombe Brossier and Marguerite Jouanne had no doubt left two deep wounds in his heart, and these he only exhibited with grief and reluctance. He married Marguerite Jouanne; and I find in the official record of an execution which took place at Rouen a proof that the relentless Master Jouanne exacted from his son-in-law a stringent discharge of his engagements. The record says 'that, having to break on the wheel a certain Martin Eslau, Master Pierre Jouanne, principal executioner, having compelled his son-in-law, who was but lately married, to aim a blow at the culprit, the said son-in-law fell in a fit, and was hooted by the mob.'

The happiness which Charles Sanson had so dearly paid for passed away as a dream. His wife died, after giving birth to a son.

CHAPTER III.

ARRIVAL IN PARIS.

IT was towards the end of the year 1685 that my ancestor Charles Sanson de Longval quitted Normandy, leaving behind him the remains of that Marguerite Jouanne who had brought him so unfortunate a marriage portion. The events I have chronicled had almost disturbed his reason; he had fallen into a dark, fidgety mood, which increased the sinister appearance he owed to his avocations. At Rouen he was avoided with something like terror; when he passed through the streets, the inhabitants pointed out to each other the man who all over his person bore the marks of a stormy existence. Most ignored his trials; but a glance at Sanson was sufficient to identify him as the executioner; and men, women, and children recoiled from him.

For many reasons, therefore, my ancestor was not sorry to renounce his unpleasant celebrity, and to leave a spot replete with sad recollections. He hastened to accede to the proposal which was made to him of an exchange of his provincial jurisdiction for that of the capital of the kingdom. The time was fraught with grave events. Chancellor Letellier had just died, re-

signing his seals into the hands of President Boucherat, who was reputed a kind and honest man. The Marquis de Bullion, a perfect gentleman, had just been appointed Provost of Paris. Thus the magistracy was being altered at the two extremities of the social ladder in the persons of the Chancellor of France, the Provost of Paris, and the executioner.

The profound emotion caused by the sudden deaths which had thinned the Royal Family on the very steps of the throne, the mysterious doings of the Chambre-Ardente with regard to the subtle poison, borrowed of the Borgias, which had been styled *powder of succession*; all this excitement, we say, had just subsided; and nothing could have troubled the horizon, if an act of the worst policy—the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes—had not opened for the nation a new era of calamities. I shall not enter into any digression concerning this return to an intolerance which had already fed so many civil wars in France; I merely wish to allude to the effect this event had in Sanson de Longval's exceptional sphere. A declaration of the King decreed the most rigorous penalties against the dying who refused the Sacrament because they belonged to the Reformed Religion. It ordered that in case of recovery heretics should be sentenced to amende honorable, hard labour for life, and forfeiture of property; and in case of death, that their trial should nevertheless be proceeded with, and their bodies be dragged on a hurdle, and then thrown into the common sewer.

Another declaration enacted the same penalties

against the heretics who attempted to leave the country, as well as against those who abetted them. All the Protestant *émigrés*, and those reputed as such, were threatened with forfeiture when they returned to France after a brief delay, and a reward of 1,000 livres was promised to whoever could give information of or prevent a design of emigration. I hasten to add that such excesses of fanaticism were posterior to my ancestor's resolve to accept the office of executioner of Paris; otherwise I have no doubt he would have remained in Rouen. Moreover, these awful laws and posthumous penalties were little more than legal fictions, being enacted rather to intimidate than to be carried out. I find no trace of such sentences having been executed, in the papers left by Sanson de Longval. If real persecutions were devised at the time against the Protestants, it was in the provinces, not in Paris.

On his arrival, Sanson was disagreeably impressed by having to put up at the House of Pillory, or, as the people called it, the Executioner's Mansion. This abode, by no means a cheerful one, was a dark, octagonal construction, over which was placed a revolving cage, the whole edifice terminating in a sharp steeple. Before the door was a cross, at the foot of which bankrupts came to declare that they abandoned their property, after which they received a green cap from the executioner's hands. Around the house were shops which the executioner rented; and adjoining these were a stable and a kind of shed, under which the bodies of those who perished by the executioner's hand were deposited for a night.

During his short stay at the House of Pillory, my ancestor acquired a taste for anatomy; and his studies were not fruitless, for he consigned to writing many curious observations on the muscular system, and I have still some prescriptions of his for diseases of the joints. The study of anatomy and the manipulation of certain remedies were perpetuated in our family. None among us abstained from this practice; and the reader will be astonished at the enumeration, in the sequel of the present work, of the cures of patients who came to us for relief.

Sanson de Longval soon had enough of his official residence; and, as no law compelled him to live there, he sought suitable quarters in some remote part of Paris. The place now occupied by a part of the Faubourg Poissonnière was then an almost deserted spot called New France. The only buildings it contained was the convent of Saint Vincent de Paul, and a modest church patronised by St. Anne. Nowadays the church has been turned into a beershop, and the convent into a prison. Charles Sanson had a house erected near the Church of St. Anne, after letting the Executioner's Mansion for 600 livres—a large sum for the time.

The first years of Charles Sanson de Longval's residence in Paris were marked by no particularly interesting occurrence until the trial and execution of Madame Tiquet. I find many a page of blood in the annals of my family before reaching the account of this remarkable case; but even crime, it must be admitted, has its aristocracy, and I should far less interest my

readers by relating to them the execution of some obscure criminal than by the authentic details I am in a position to give as to a young woman whose fate engrossed the attention of the whole of Paris towards the end of the seventeenth century. Her trial, of which the termination was far more tragic, produced in those days as much sensation as that of Mdme. Lafarge in our time. For the sake of accuracy, I must, however, mention a few executions superintended by Charles Sanson. The culprits were: In 1685, Claude Vautier, broken on the wheel for theft and murder. In 1688, Jean Nouis fils, for the same crime. In 1689, François Mannequin, for false evidence: he was only one-and-twenty years of age, and during his trial he pretended that he was only seventeen, hoping to soften his judges. In 1690, Gabrielle Henry, wife of Jacques Piedeseigle, assistant major of Count de Chamilly, convicted of murder. In 1691, Urbaine Attibard, wife of Pierre Barrois, aged thirty-five, who, having poisoned her husband, was sentenced to amende honorable, to have her fist struck off, and to be hanged; her body to be burnt, and her ashes to be scattered to the wind. And lastly, Claire Lermenet, wife of Michel Cloqueteur, servant of M. de Breteuil, put to death, after horrible tortures, for common theft.

CHAPTER IV.

TRIAL AND EXECUTION OF MDME. TIQUET.

IN the first months of the year 1677 a strange event produced a profound sensation throughout Paris, and soon became the leading topic of conversation. A well-known and esteemed magistrate, M. Tiquet, escaped, as if by miracle, from a conspiracy against his life. After being fired upon by a number of murderers placed in ambush near his house, he fell insensible on the pavement, and but for the prompt action of his valet, who had heard the report of firearms, and rushed out to his master's help, he would probably have been despatched.

Much surprise was evinced when it became known that M. Tiquet, mindless of his desperate plight, had obstinately refused to be taken to his own house, and had preferred the hospitality of one of his lady friends, Mdme. de Villemur, to that of his own mansion, where, however, he knew that he could command the cares of his wife and of the two children he had had by her. This conduct, which, to say the least, was singular, might have given birth to rather unfavourable comments on the morality of the councillor, if far graver rumours had not furnished a quite different explanation. It was also

said that Mdme. Tiquet, on hearing of the crime, had gone to Mdme. de Villemur's house to see her husband; but that access to him had been denied her; and further, that when the magistrate sent to him to inquire into the crime had questioned him, M. Tiquet answered that, to his knowledge, the only enemy he had was his wife.

This was enough to awaken the curiosity of a population at all times greedy of scandal and domestic mysteries. The history of M. and Mdme. Tiquet was soon in every mouth. It ran thus: Angélique Carlier (Mdme. Tiquet) came from Metz, where she was born in 1657. Her father was a rich printer and bookseller; and at his death he left a fortune of 80,000*l.* to be divided between his daughter and her brother. The latter had been her only guardian. When she appeared in society, she was an accomplished person, and possessed great powers of fascination. Her beauty was striking, her education left nothing to be desired; in fact, her destiny promised to be one of unusual brilliancy. She was soon sought by a considerable number of suitors, among whom were rich and powerful men. But, either from her inability to make a choice, or because love was unknown to her heart, Angélique took a long time before she came to a decision. Her hesitation became favourable to M. Tiquet, a magistrate, who had come forward in the ranks of her admirers: his position as a councillor of Parliament tickled the girl's vanity, and she at length selected him. The plebeian name of Pierre Tiquet sufficiently testified that he owed his position as a magistrate to his own talents rather than to his birth; but at that

time mixed alliances were far less frequent than they eventually became, and Mdlle. Carlier could hardly aspire to a higher station than that which her husband offered her. As to M. Tiquet, he married both for love and for money. He had spared no means to arrive at his ends, and had gained the good graces of two powerful auxiliaries, Angélique's brother and one of her aunts who had some influence over the girl. With this help he surmounted the secret repulsion he inspired in Angélique, less, perhaps, on account of his grave and unattractive face than as a result of his age, which at the time exceeded the bounds of ordinary maturity, and of his rather vulgar name.

The counsels of her aunt and brother, and the prospect of becoming the wife of an exalted magistrate, triumphed over her real feelings, and she accepted M. Tiquet's hand. It was said that the latter, in order to hasten her determination, had resigned himself to an heroic effort of generosity. On Angélique's birthday he offered her a magnificent bouquet of which the flowers were mingled with diamonds and precious stones worth 15,000 livres (about 45,000 francs in our money). The honeymoon lasted nearly three years. Two children, a boy and a girl, were born, and nothing seemed to trouble the domestic peace of M. and Mdme. Tiquet. The lady, however, had expensive tastes; she had a fine establishment, carriages, horses, &c., and she also received in her drawing-rooms a brilliant, although rather mixed society. Her husband, whose only income came from his office, and who had made heavy debts in order to marry, occa-

sionally remonstrated with his wife on her ruinous taste, but without the slightest effect. His admonitions, at first tender and friendly, became imperative, but without avail. Angélique began to dislike her husband, and at last she got to hate him. Without being aware of it, her brother contributed to this revulsion of Angélique's sentiments for her husband. He introduced to her a friend of his, a young officer named M. de Montgeorges, captain of the French guards. The latter was young, handsome, of martial gait and imposing stature, and gifted with elegant manners; and he contrasted favourably with the morose husband of Mdme. Tiquet. The handsome officer made an impression on her heart. The daily disputes with Tiquet made her still more accessible to her dawning passion. Mdme. Tiquet was soon intimate with Montgeorges, and if anything could atone for her fault, it was its singularity and the fact that she was true unto death to her lover.

Mdme. Tiquet was imprudent enough to make no mystery of her amours. In the violence of her passion she forgot everything, and the councillor was soon apprised of the conduct of his wife. Great was his surprise, and great also was his anger. He began by turning out Montgeorges and making away with Madame's evening parties. This act of domestic authority was not calculated to restore harmony in the household. Angélique vowed she would never submit to the kind of life her husband wished to impose upon her, and that all his efforts would tend to free her. This appeared to her the easier as her fortune belonged to her. Unfortu-

nately she found ready auxiliaries in her brother and aunt. At the instigation of the latter, an army of creditors assailed Tiquet, and obtained against him sentence after sentence. On her side Mdme. Tiquet lost no time in demanding a judicial separation. The husband was not the less active on his own behalf. He complained of the scandalous conduct of his wife, excited the compassion of his brother councillors, and by the intermediary of M. de Novion, the President of Parliament, he at length obtained a lettre-de-cachet (a blank order for imprisonment to be filled up by the holder) against Angélique. Henceforth he thought he was the master, and attempted to dictate to his wife. He ordered her to be more submissive, if she cared for her liberty, never to see again the handsome captain, and to stay all proceedings for separation. Angélique could not keep her temper. She bitterly insulted her husband; and as M. Tiquet, stung to the quick, was triumphantly showing his lettre-de-cachet, saying that he would make immediate use of it, Angélique tore it from his hand and threw it into the fire.

M. Tiquet's rage and disappointment were supreme. He made vain attempts to procure another lettre-de-cachet; but his solicitations only met with laughter and irony. The luckless councillor became the laughing-stock of Paris: and this might have pacified his wife. She, however, persisted in her intention of separating from him. It was then that she devised a criminal plan for getting rid of her husband, so as to marry Montgeorges, whom she still continued to see, after Tiquet's

narrow escape. She communicated her murderous object to Jacques Moura, her porter, who became her accomplice. Many others, whose names it is of no use to give, joined in the plot. On the evening appointed for the crime, all the accomplices were posted on Tiquet's way; but at the last moment Angélique was undecided, and out of remorse or fear she countermanded the execution of the plot. As to the councillor, although he had no suspicion of the criminal designs of his wife, he became more and more jealous. Suspecting the honesty of his porter, Jacques Moura, he dismissed him with many reproaches and threats, and being unwilling to entrust the door to anyone, he actually became the porter of his own mansion, receiving only well-known persons, taking the key away with him when he went out, and concealing it under his pillow during the night.

This minute inquisition and almost complete imprisonment exasperated Mdme. Tiquet, and threw her again into morbid ideas of murder. One day the old councillor was ill, in his room; his wife, suddenly becoming affectionate, sent him by her valet a cup of broth she had prepared herself; but the shrewd servant, guessing his mistress's design, made a pretence of stumbling, dropped the cup, and left the house. Tiquet knew nothing of this second attempt. Mdme. Tiquet was not discouraged, and still entertained sinister intentions.

A few nights after this adventure M. Tiquet was in the company of Mdme. de Villemur, who lived in a house not far from his, while his wife remained at home with the Countess de Lénonville. As M. Tiquet emerged

in the street, several shots flashed through the darkness, and he fell, struck by five bullets. None of the wounds, however, were mortal.

On the following day Mdme. Tiquet rose early, and, probably to avert suspicion, she paid a visit to her friend, Mdme. d'Aunay. The latter asked her whether M. Tiquet suspected any one. 'Even if he knew them,' answered Angélique, 'he would take care not to say so. Ah, my dear friend, to-day it is my turn to be murdered!' Mdme. d'Aunay tried to calm her by assuring her that so foul a charge could never be brought against her. 'The best thing they can do,' she added, 'is to arrest the porter your husband dismissed the other day. He may very well have committed the crime out of revenge.'

These words struck Mdme. Tiquet; she saw all that she could make, for her own defence, out of the dismissal of Jacques Moura, who had more than once expressed the greatest vindictiveness with regard to his former master, and had uttered threats against him. She resolved to remain in Paris, and turned a deaf ear to the advice that was given to her on all sides. A monk offered to disguise her, and take her to Calais, where she could embark for England. Angélique steadily refused, but in spite of her apparent security she felt anything but safe. One morning she was conversing with the Countess d'Aunay, who, being convinced of her innocence, was faithful to her to the last. As the Countess was about to retire, Mdme. Tiquet kept her back, saying that she had a foreboding that she was going to be arrested, and she should like her friend to be present. Hardly had she uttered these

words when the criminal lieutenant entered, followed by a number of archers. Mdme. Tiquet remained unmoved. She asked leave to embrace her youngest son, followed the lieutenant, and during the whole of the way showed extraordinary calm and serenity. She was taken to the little, and then to the great Châtelet. The indictment preferred against her was drawn up with unusual expedition.

As soon as Angélique's arrest was known a man named Auguste Cathelain spontaneously declared that three years before he had received money of Jacques Moura, commissioned by Angélique, to join in the murder of M. Tiquet. Jacques Moura and the informer himself were arrested. They were confronted with the chief prisoner; no proof, however, could be adduced that they were the authors of the last attempt; but proofs were not found wanting concerning the first plot. And, strange to say, the conspiracy which had not been carried out became the basis of the charge against Mdme. Tiquet.

Sanson de Longval had followed all the phases of this celebrated affair with painful interest, for he but too well foresaw that work was being prepared for him. It was with grief that he heard, on June 3, 1699, that a sentence of the Châtelet 'condemned Angélique-Nicole Carlier to be decapitated in the Place de Grève; Jacques Moura, her late porter, to be hanged; their property to be confiscated, and from Angélique's property ten thousand for the benefit of the King, and one hundred thousand livres for that of Tiquet, her husband, to be extracted.'

This sentence, of which I have given the textual wording, caused much sensation, although it was felt that something must intervene before it was carried out. M. Tiquet appealed to the Parliament, on the plea that only 100,000 livres had been awarded to him and to his children. He asked that an additional 15,000 livres should be taken from his wife's fortune and handed over to him. The Parliament was not deaf to the prayer of one of its own members. By a decision taken on June 17, 20,000, instead of 15,000, livres were awarded to Tiquet. But the remainder of the sentence was confirmed. This decision was much criticised. The public felt that the Parliament exacted too harsh a retribution for the crime committed against itself in the person of M. Tiquet. After all, the victim had recovered; M. Tiquet was quite well again, and no proof tended to show that Angélique was responsible for the second attempt on her husband's life. And then Mdme. Tiquet was handsome, witty, and accomplished, and she belonged to the best society; her love passages with Montgeorges, to which the trial had attracted general attention, her ill-assorted union with an old man, to whom she had sacrificed her youngest years, and many other things besides, contributed to make her interesting. Her fate excited much compassion, and on all sides it was hoped that royal clemency might spare so touching a victim.

It was said that M. Tiquet himself went to Versailles with his two children, and threw himself at the feet of Louis XIV. Having failed to obtain either his wife's reprieve, or some mitigation of her punishment, he asked

that the whole of her property should be remitted to him. This he obtained. But the cupidity manifested by the old councillor on this as on other occasions excited universal indignation; and this naturally gave rise to a corresponding amount of interest and sympathy on Mdme. Tiquet's behalf. Her brother also was moving heaven and earth to save her. Thanks to his high connections, he induced the most powerful persons to intercede in her favour; and Louis XIV. might have yielded but for the stubborn opposition of the Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal de Noailles.

All hope being lost, my ancestor could only expect a prompt requisition of his services. The execution was appointed to take place on the day after the Fête-Dieu. The altars erected in the public places and streets had but just been removed, when Sanson de Longval arrived on the Place de Grève to see the scaffold erected. An immense crowd witnessed these sinister preparations.

Meanwhile Mdme. Tiquet was led into the chamber of torture, where, in the presence of the criminal lieutenant, her sentence was read to her without bringing a tinge of paleness to her cheeks. Deffita, the criminal lieutenant, was one of Angélique's former admirers. He could barely contain his emotion; but nevertheless he thought fit to address to the victim a few words of exhortation. The poor woman could hardly forbear from comparing the times when this magistrate was sighing at her feet, with the present occasion. 'I am not afraid to die,' she said. 'The day which brings my life to an end sees the last of my misfortunes. I do not

defy death, but I hope to bear it with resignation, and God will perhaps do me the favour to permit me to preserve on the scaffold as much calmness as I have shown during my trial and in this room where my sentence has just been read to me.'

The lieutenant then implored her to confess her crime and to reveal the names of her accomplices, so as to avoid the horrors of torture. At first she peremptorily refused. But, after drinking the first jugful of water, her fortitude forsook her as she saw the preparations for other tortures, and she at length confessed everything. When she was asked whether Montgeorges had taken part in the crime: 'Good heavens, no!' she exclaimed; 'if I had told him of it, I should have lost his esteem, which was dearer to me than life.' She was then handed to the Abbé de la Chétardie, her confessor. He took a place beside her in the fatal cart, where was also Jacques Moura, accompanied by a priest. The *cortége* slowly wedged its way through the multitude of spectators, and reached the Place de Grève. As was usual, Mdme. Tiquet was clad in spotless white, and her dress enhanced the splendid beauty she still retained, in spite of her forty-two years, and of her terrible trials. The cart had scarcely halted before the scaffold when a violent storm burst. The execution was momentarily deferred. For half an hour Angélique had before her the apparatus of death and a hearse drawn by her own horses, which had been sent by her family to take away her body.

The fatal moment was at hand. Jacques Moura was executed first. When Angélique's turn was come, she

advanced, gracefully bowing to my ancestor, and holding out her hand, that he might help her to ascend the steps. He took with respect the fingers which were soon to be stiffened by death. Mdme. Tiquet then mounted on the scaffold with the imposing and majestic step which had always been admired in her. She knelt on the platform, said a short prayer, and, turning to her confessor, 'I thank you for your consolations and kind words; I shall bear them to the Lord.'

She arranged her head-dress and long hair; and, after kissing the block, she looked at my ancestor, and said:

'Sir, will you be good enough to show me the position I am to take?'

Sanson de Longval, impressed by her look, had but just the strength to answer that she had only to put her head on the block.

Angélique obeyed, and said again:

'Am I well thus?'

A cloud passed before my ancestor's eyes; he raised with both hands the heavy two-edged sword which was used for the purpose of decapitation, described with it a kind of semicircle, and let the blade fall with its full weight on the neck of the handsome victim.

The blood spurted out, but the head did not fall. A cry of horror rose from the crowd.

Sanson de Longval struck again; again the hissing of the sword was heard, but the head was not separated from the body. The cries of the crowd were becoming threatening.

Blinded by the blood which spurted at every stroke, Sanson brandished his weapon a third time with a kind of frenzy. At last the head rolled at his feet. His assistants picked it up and placed it on the block, where it remained for some time; and several witnesses asserted that even in death it retained its former calmness and beauty.

CHAPTER V.

PAMPHLETS UNDER LOUIS XIV.

I HAVE now to relate a lamentable history which dwells on a time posterior to the death of Mdme. Tiquet; but as the events which led to it are anterior to this lady's execution, I am compelled to return on my steps as early as the first half of Louis XIV.'s reign. The sun which the great King had taken for his emblem was beginning to pale.

The Augsburg league had just given the last blow to the public funds, already exhausted as they were by thirty years' war and extravagant prodigality. France had conquered at Fleurus, Nerwinden, and La Marsaille; but she was tiring of glory, and calculating the cost of such victories. Likewise the disaster of La Hogue, the failure of the campaign of 1693 which Louis XIV. led in person, had shown at home as well as abroad that, after all, the monarch was only a human being. The accomplishment of the French unity which he received from the hands of Richelieu, and which he so gloriously achieved, was not completed without difficulty. Louis XIV. committed a grievous mistake. After introducing unity into his government, he wished to

extend it to the consciences of his subjects. On October 17, 1685, he had revoked the Edict of Nantes and covered France with those singular apostles whom Louvois called his *booted missionaries.* In January 1686 another edict deprived the Protestants of the right of keeping their children. The 'heretics' emigrated in large numbers. Those who abjured retained deep hatred for the despotic power which oppressed them. It was then that the revolutionary spirit of the nation awoke. Popular revendication commenced; it was inaugurated by the warfare of pamphlets. These attacks became the more dangerous because the personal prestige of Louis had not survived the greatness of the monarch. The chivalrous lover of La Vallière, Fontanges, and Montespan had espoused, in 1684, the widow of Scarron the cripple. This sudden fall of the demigod gave a fearful weapon to his adversaries, and the pamphleteers made prompt use of it. In 1689 a pamphlet entitled the 'Sighs of Enslaved France for Liberty' produced a great effect. The liberal aspirations which it contained were so new that, although it was couched in rather dogmatic terms, the most superficial minds were captivated by them; and for some time there was a real struggle between the public and the police, who with equal avidity searched for copies of the pamphlets; the former to read, the latter to destroy them. This affair, of course, led many people to the Bastille or to the torture-chamber.

If the government of Louis XIV. had been severe in all such attempts against the majesty of the throne, it

became pitiless with those who dared attack the companion chosen by the King. The latter was doubtless aware that in marrying Mdme. de Maintenon he had made a political mistake ; but he was so spoilt by adulation that the most enormous crime was to remind him of his error. In 1694 a few copies of a libel entitled the 'Ghost of M. Scarron' were circulated in Paris and Versailles. The pamphlet was adorned with an engraving which parodied the monument raised by Marshal Lafeuillade, on the Place des Victoires, to the glory of his master. Instead of having four statues chained at his feet, the King was represented chained between four women : La Vallière, Fontanges, Montespan, and Maintenon.

It was among the princes of the blood and at the Court that the *old* woman, as the Palatine Princess called her, had most enemies. This hatred defeated the vigilance of the police ; before the prefect, M. de la Reynie, knew of the existence of the work, the King found a copy under his napkin at breakfast, and Mdme. de Maintenon received another copy at the same time and in the same way.

This outrage, inflicted, as it were, in the midst of his palace, exasperated Louis XIV. M. de la Reynie was immediately called to Versailles ; the King bitterly upbraided him for what he called his guilty indifference, and ordered him to discover the authors of the libel and to punish them without pity.

Either the persons who had given cause for royal anger were very powerful and clever, or the means of action of a lieutenant of police were limited, for the best

agents of M. de la Reynie were unsuccessful. Still, the King was as angry as ever; he even seemed as vexed at the failure of his agents as at the insult, and whenever he saw the lieutenant he did not spare his reproaches to that unfortunate official.

At length chance smiled on M. de la Reynie, who saw his disgrace fast drawing near. One morning he was carelessly listening to the complaint of an artisan, from whose dwelling 5,000 livres had been stolen the day before. The poor fellow obviously took the lieutenant for Providence itself, and, supposing that he could get his money restored, he was loud in his lamentations. While he was speaking, the secretary of the lieutenant entered and hurriedly handed a letter to this magistrate, begging him to read it at once.

The lieutenant had scarcely glanced at the paper than he jumped in his arm-chair with every sign of strong excitement. At his bidding the secretary went in quest of a police officer, while M. de la Reynie was feverishly writing a few lines on a piece of parchment bearing the seal of the State.

His emotion was so great that he altogether forgot the presence of a third party; and he did not notice that the despoiled artisan, who was standing within a yard of him, could read every word he was writing. The man was looking on with the candid confidence of one who is so convinced of the importance of his business that he cannot doubt but that the magistrate is engrossed by it; but the secretary, who had returned with an officer, roughly pulled him back.

M. de la Reynie looked up and appeared disagreeably surprised by the presence of the artisan.

'Write down your name,' said he in a harsh voice; 'your affair shall be seen to.'

Profound astonishment appeared on the face of the man; he hesitated for a few seconds, went to the table, took up a piece of paper and a pen, and then turning round:

'Allow me to observe, monseigneur,' said he, 'that I have had the honour to acquaint you with my name and occupation; and further, that you remembered my words so well that I was marvelling at the strength of your memory when, a moment ago, I saw you writing my name down as correctly as I could do.'

M. de la Reynie bit his lip, and made a sign to his secretary to draw closer to the artisan.

'Your name is Jean Larcher,' said he to the latter.

'It is, monseigneur.'

'You are a bookbinder of the rue des Lions-Saint-Paul.'

'Monseigneur is quite right,' answered poor Jean Larcher, who was smiling, while he crumpled in his fingers the piece of paper he was about to write upon.

M. de la Reynie was smiling also, although in a different way. He took the police officer aside, whispered a few words in his ear, and then introducing him to the bookbinder: 'This gentleman,' said he, 'will accompany you to your house; he will do all in his power to discover your thief, and we shall take care that you meet with such justice as is due to you.'

The lieutenant laid stress on these last words, and the bookbinder, astounded at meeting with so gracious a reception from a high magistrate, could hardly find words to express his thanks and gratitude. He left the residence of the lieutenant of police without any other apparent escort than that obligingly tendered by M. de la Reynie. On the way the police officer questioned the bookbinder, who furnished him with all the information he had already given to the lieutenant, not omitting to give the topography of his house, concerning which his companion seemed particularly interested. Master Jean Larcher was overjoyed at the great attention shown by M. de la Reynie's man: he did not doubt but that his 5,000 livres would soon be returned to him, and he insisted on regaling his companion with the best wine they could procure in a wine shop.

After this halt they went in the direction of the rue des Lions-Saint-Paul. Soldiers and policemen were standing around the bookbinder's house. The good man manifested more satisfaction than surprise at this military display. He observed to his companion that if his house had been as well guarded on the preceding night, so many good people would not have to be troubled now. The house inhabited by Larcher was narrow, but rather deep. It consisted of a ground floor composed of two rooms, one on the street side which was used as a shop and dining-room, the other being a workshop. An alley led to a staircase which communicated with the first floor, composed of two more rooms. One of these was Master Larcher's bedroom;

the other contained the books and papers reserved for binding. To this last room the police officer asked to be taken. But while Larcher was showing the cupboard wherein his money had been secreted, M. de la Reynie's man took quite another direction, and climbing up to the top of another cupboard, he brought down a small bundle of pamphlets upon which a commissaire, who suddenly turned up, pounced like a vulture.

Master Larcher, greatly astonished that so much attention should be given to what appeared to him of no import concerning his own business, was pulling the officer by the sleeve to show him how the cupboard had been forced open. But this last gentleman's manners towards him had considerably changed; he hardly listened to the man who, a few moments before, was treated by him as an intimate friend.

However, the commissaire began to question the bookbinder. He showed him the pamphlets, and asked if they were his property.

In his impatience, Master Larcher answered with some rashness that all that was in the house belonged to him or to his clients. The commissaire then untied the bundle, took a copy of the pamphlet, thrust it under Larcher's eyes, and asked where it came from.

When he read the title of the pamphlet, 'M. Scarron's Ghost,' of which he, as well as others, had heard, he turned white, trembled, took his head in his hands, and for a few moments remained quite stupefied. He, however, recovered his powers of speech and swore that he had no knowledge of the presence of the fatal pam-

phlets in his shop, and that he now saw them for the first time. M. de la Reynie's people shrugged their shoulders disdainfully. In vain did he repeat his assertions and try to exculpate himself by reminding them, that he himself had brought the police to his house with the calmness of a faultless conscience. The officers told him he could explain himself before his judges; and they prepared to take him away.

In a corner of the apartment, Jean Larcher's wife, concealing her face in her apron, was weeping and giving every token of violent grief. As Larcher was crossing the threshold, he begged the officer with whom he had been at first on friendly terms to allow him to say farewell to the woman he hardly hoped to see again. Hardened as he was, the policeman could not refuse this slight favour; he signed to his men to relent, and the unfortunate husband exclaimed, 'Marian, Marian!' But Madame Larcher's sobs became more violent, and she did not seem to hear her husband's call. Those who stood around her pushed her towards the prisoner; she hesitated, and then rushing into Larcher's arms she embraced him with many demonstrations of grief and tenderness.

The woman's hesitation had not escaped the officer's eye; he also remarked that Mdme. Larcher was crying in the way of children; that is, that her eyes were dry, and that not one tear trickled down her cheeks. This struck him as so extraordinary that he began to suspect that Jean Larcher's innocence might, after all, be more genuine than that of the miscreants it was his wont to

apprehend. When his prisoner was safely confined in the Châtelet, he imparted his suspicions to M. de la Reynie. He reminded him that it was an anonymous letter which denounced Jean Larcher, and indicated the precise spot where the pamphlets were concealed; he related what he had seen, and expressed his conviction that the unfortunate bookbinder was the victim of some conspiracy. But the lieutenant of police had already announced the man's arrest to the King, who had congratulated him on his capture; he held his culprit, and he was no man to relinquish his prey for a shadow; that is to say, for the uncertain chances of an enquiry.

If divers circumstances told in the prisoner's favour, there were heavy considerations on the other side. Before he was found in possession of the libel which had baffled the search of the police, Jean Larcher had seriously misbehaved himself. He was a convert to Protestantism, and had allowed his son to remain faithful to his family creed and to take refuge in England against persecutions. To this 'crime' he added another—that of remaining in constant communication with his child.

Jean Larcher appeared alone at the bar. He was tortured three times, and he suffered with more firmness than might have been expected of a poor man already advanced in years. He constantly refused to name his accomplices. When questioned he said that the death of one innocent man was enough for his judges, and that he had no wish that, through him, the latter should have to answer for more blood.

Sentenced to be hanged, he was led to the gibbet on

Friday, November 19, 1694, at six o'clock in the evening. He was seated in a cart with a man named Rambault, a printer of Lyons, convicted of a similar crime. Larcher was fidgety, and seemed filled with thoughts not relating to his approaching end. He however behaved with courage, and died protesting his innocence.

Before dying he earnestly begged Sanson to take a scapulary he had, and to give it to his son if he claimed it. Some years after, my ancestor had an opportunity of accomplishing the poor man's wish. It led to a fearful tragedy, and at the same time to the demonstration of the bookbinder's innocence. The scapulary contained the name of a man who was Master Jean Larcher's assistant. Nicolas Larcher, the son, who had been in England, discovered that his mother had married the man designated by his father as the culprit. Seized with frenzy, he broke into their house in the dead of the night, and murdered both his mother and her second husband. The young man was arrested, but died in prison of brain fever.

In 1699 my ancestor had passed his sixty-fourth year. Hitherto he had borne his lot with manly and severe resignation; but he suddenly broke down. He began to abhor the solitude he liked so much. He was uneasy, and started at the slightest noise; silence filled him with awe. Darkness caused him such terror that he constantly kept a lighted lamp near his bedside. This change became so alarming that his friends and his son, who had reached manhood, advised him to choose

another partner, whose presence and cares might soften the bitterness of his last days. Some time before he had been able to appreciate the qualities of Jeanne Renée Dubut, daughter of Pierre Dubut, upholsterer, of the rue de Beauregard. Touched by the friendship and devotion she had shown him, my ancestor married her on Saturday, July 11, 1699.

Jeanne Renée to a certain extent realised the hopes of the few who were attached to Sanson de Longval. But his quietude seems to have been of short duration. He resigned his office into his son's hands, for anything that reminded him of the functions he had discharged for so many years filled him with fear and horror. The sight of a drop of blood threw the old executioner into nervous fits which appalled all those who witnessed them.

He could bear to sojourn in Paris no longer; he soon retired with his second wife to a small farm at Condé, in the Brie district, which he had bought, and where he at length found the only repose our like can hope for—death.

In spite of minute searches and enquiries I have been unable to ascertain the exact date of his death. The municipal record of the little village which saw the last of Charles Sanson has, naturally enough, disappeared, and his last day was not recorded in his son's notes.

CHAPTER VI.

CELLAMARE'S CONSPIRACY.

SANSON'S son, whose Christian name was Charles, like his father's, took official possession of the functions he had discharged for the last five years, on September 8, 1703. He was of a mild and gentle disposition, and by temper and appearance was much like his mother, Marguerite Jouanne. On April 30, 1707, he married Marthe Dubut, his stepmother's sister. No astonishment need be felt at both father and son espousing two sisters, when it is remembered that Sanson de Longval married at an advanced stage of life, and that he took his wife only as a companion of his old age. Moreover, I may observe that, in our unfortunate profession, we could hardly choose our wives out of our own sphere, and that, as with accursed races, our families perpetually mingled and intermarried in such a way as to unite in the same person divers degrees of relationship which usually exclude each other. Thus, by this marriage, Sanson de Longval's widow became the sister-in-law of her stepson, and the young person Charles Sanson married was previously, in some degree, his aunt.

I can make these anomalies more apparent by enu-

merating the persons who were present at the wedding. On one side were a second Marguerite Jouanne, widow of Jean Baptiste Morin in the first place, and in the second of Nicolas Levasseur, both executioners, qualified in the act of marriage as my ancestor's maternal aunt; Jeanne Renée Dubut, widow of Charles Sanson de Longval, his stepmother, and sister of the bride; Nicolas Lemanchand, executioner at Mantes, cousin of the bride, through Marie Levasseur, his wife; and Noël Desmasures, usher of the Châtelet, friend. On Marthe Dubut's side were Pierre Dubut, her father; Elizabeth Voisin, his second wife; Gilles Darboucher, greengrocer, who had married a sister of Dubut's first wife, and was, therefore, uncle of Marthe; and lastly, Marguerite Guillaume, widow of André Guillaume, one of the King's officers.

It may be seen that the second Marguerite Jouanne had only been able to find executioners for husbands, that Marie Levasseur had the same fate, and lastly that Marthe Dubut could not pretend to a higher union than her eldest sister's. The gibbet and the axe were in the dowry of these poor women when they went to the altar.

Charles spared no means to brighten Marthe Dubut's existence. The emoluments of the executioner were then considerable; they amounted, chiefly through the right of *havage*, to not less than 60,000 livres. My second ancestor was, therefore, enabled to surround his young wife with all the comforts and elegances of life.

Shortly after his marriage he left the old house of New France. His notary, Master Touvenot, purchased for him a superb dwelling situate at the corner of the Rue des Poissonniers and the Rue d'Enfer, now the Faubourg Poissonnière and the Rue Bleue. It is the house which forms the corner of the Rue Papillon and Rue Bleue, but it would be difficult to discriminate the features of the old house amidst the changes and improvements that have taken place in it. In my ancestor's time it was a large mansion between court and garden, built on grounds of twelve acres in extent. Behind the mansion were immense gardens, picturesquely laid out, of which a part, planted with shrubs and trees, had the appearance of a real park.

This property belonged to M. Paul Antoine-Caignet, on one part, and on the other to Charles-Auguste Angenont, equerry, when Charles Sanson bought it through M. Touvenot's agency. It remained in the family until my grandfather sold it in 1778 to two gentlemen named Papillon and Riboutte. These gentlemen gave their names to the two streets they constructed on the land occupied by the shady paths of the garden of my ancestors. I am sure that few of the inhabitants of these streets know that their dwellings are erected on the spot where the former executioners of Paris used to stroll, after accomplishing their bloody work.

The rate of land had increased so much in 1778 that my grandfather sold for more than 100,000 livres the house and grounds, for which Charles Sanson

had only given 6,000. In his time it was an almost lordly dwelling; the building, two stories high, was preceded by a large court, surrounded with adjoining constructions of all kinds, sheds, stables, coach-house, hot-houses, &c. On the ground floor was a hall, giving access to the garden by a double staircase; on the right of the hall the kitchens; on the left, the dining and drawing room; on the first floor my ancestor's apartments; and on the second floor the servants' rooms.

The garden was one of those marvels such as the agglomeration of modern cities no longer allows. One part of it was converted into beds of flowers, which bloomed along the paths; beyond was a series of unequal squares, carefully separated by sanded alleys, which were bordered with fruit trees. A large sward occupied the middle of the garden. At the other end of the grounds were clusters of trees symmetrically pierced with one large path, and four lateral paths, above which the boughs of the trees met and formed the thickest shade.

In this charming house Charles Sanson spent his life with Marthe Dubut, his wife. He lived there humbly and quietly, forgetting, as well as he could, the avocations and bent of his existence. I am not aware, however, that he justified the apprehensions which had poisoned the last years of Sanson de Longval, and ever regretted his fate.

From 1703 to 1716, the list of executions of the second Sanson is almost exclusively composed of

obscure names, connected with vulgar crimes. Cupidity is always their chief motive, and murder the means of execution. A few highway robbers, Licaon, La Chesnaye, Muillart, Arpalin, Petit-Jacques, hardly relieve the monotony of this nomenclature by the audacity of their deeds.

Louis XIV. died in 1715; the throne devolved to a child five years old, and the Regency, which the late King wished to confide to the Duke du Maine, fell to the Duke of Orleans. After the splendours of his reign, and perhaps on account of such splendours, Louis XIV. left France humiliated and ruined. The task of retrieving his faults was a difficult one; but the hatred of the multitude for the monarch whose corpse was being taken to Saint-Denis in a solitary hearse, its enthusiasm for a prince who was only noted for his dissolute life, prompted the latter to undertake the task.

One of the first acts of the new sovereign was an edict against the farmers of the revenue. On May 12 a Chamber of Justice was established, before which a whole class of men were made to disgorge the gold on which they had fed. This court was established in the Couvent des Grands-Augustins, and an adjoining room was turned into a chamber of torture. *Question* was applied to the enriched financiers just as if they had been vulgar criminals. The penalties inflicted by the court were amende honorable, pillory, imprisonment with hard labour, death, and confiscation in any case.

This long and minute series of trials had the usual result of quarrels between great people. The booty

changed hands, but the people had no share in it. Scarcely eighty millions were returned to the coffers of the State, and the remainder was appropriated by those whose duty it was to punish exactions. It was the eternal theft of thieves deceived by confrères which, it is said, has the privilege of exciting the devil's hilarity. President de Fouqueux appropriated the property of one Bonvalais, famous for his immense wealth. There were many victims. Paparel, brother-in-law of the Marquis de la Fare, who was one of the Regent's favourites, was condemned to death. Ferlet, François Aubert, d'Armilly, Pierre Maringue, de Berally, Gourgon, Crojet, Chaillon, Henault, and many others were similarly treated. The Regent, who, as the worthy grandson of Louis XIII., liked to play the part of dispenser of justice, was relentless, and would not interfere. These executions offered nothing remarkable, for I find but few allusions to the subject in Charles Sanson's notes; and as I do not pretend to make of this book an exhibition of human butchering, I must fain leave the subject, and pass on to a more important event of the time in which my ancestor was concerned in a singular manner.

The scandalous orgies of the Regent at the Palais Royal and the acerbity of pamphlets had at length compromised his popularity, and his enemies thought the time well chosen to deprive him of power. At the head of the Regent's opponents were Philip V., King of Spain, whose ambition was to add to his crown another realm, and thus become King of the half of Europe;

and also the legitimised princes designated for the Regency by Louis XIV., who by a decree of Parliament had recently been deprived of the prerogatives of princes of the blood at the instigation of the Duke of Orleans. These ambitions and hatreds clubbed together; the plotters devised gigantic plans; enlisted a few poor noblemen; and it was this circumscribed intrigue, the authors of which would have appeared more ridiculous than guilty but for their alliance with a foreign prince, which was called the conspiracy of Cellamare.

Cardinal Alberoni, minister of Philip V., Prince de Cellamare, the Spanish Ambassador in Paris, and the Duchess du Maine, who could not console herself for losing the opportunity of governing France, were the chief wirepullers of the plot. This plan was not wanting in boldness. Philip d'Orléans was to be captured and imprisoned in the citadel of Tarragonie, and the Duke du Maine was to be proclaimed Regent; the Pretender was to be landed in England; it was further proposed to return Naples and Sicily to the empire, to annex the Netherlands to France, to give the duchy of Tuscany to the second son of the King of Spain, Sardinia to the Duke of Savoy, Commachio to the Pope, Mantua to the Venetians; to recognise Philip V.'s claim to his grandfather's throne in case the boy-king Louis XV. should die; in short, to organise a Latin empire which was to exercise an irresistible preponderance in Europe.

This was no doubt a vast conception, and it is curious

that the man of genius who devised it was so mistaken in the instruments and the means he used to carry it out. Among the princes and noblemen who joined him, not one had the stuff of an average conspirator. The auxiliaries who recruited these powerless plotters were, for the most part, timid and discredited adventurers. The result of this conspiracy on paper is well known, and it is doubtful whether it would ever have been mentioned in history had it not led to a new war between two nations the occurrence of which family links seemed to render impossible.

The statesmen who, in the boudoir of the Duchess du Maine, plotted a change in the destinies of a great nation committed the absurd blunder of giving the documents they wished to send to Spain to an underwriter of the King's library, named Buvat. A note left among the papers entrusted to his hands awoke Buvat's suspicions, and on leaving the house of the Prince de Cellamare he hastened to communicate with the able Dubois, prime minister of the Regent. Dubois used him as a spy, and was informed, day after day, of all the secrets, with which he took care not to interfere until he knew them thoroughly; and then he put a sudden stop to the conspiracy by capturing all the conspirators. But the Regent, whose influence was restored through this cabal, could show clemency without peril. No execution followed this rose-coloured plot, and there would be no need for me to allude to it if Charles Sanson had not chanced to take a part in one of its least known incidents.

An Italian nobleman, who had obtained the confidence of the Regent by promising to tell him how to make gold, at length persuaded him that he possessed the power of evoking the devil; and the adept having chosen the pits of Vanves for his operations, the Regent promised to join him there with the Marquis de Mirepoix. This Italian was the agent of a Silesian adventurer named Dé Schlieben, who had been sent to France by the Princess des Ursins. Some time before a late colonel called La Jonquière had tried to capture the Regent in the Bois de Boulogne which the prince was to traverse. He missed Philip by a quarter of an hour. La Jonquière had fled, but he had been arrested at Liége and imprisoned in the Bastille. Schlieben undertook to accomplish what La Jonquière had failed to do, and stratagem very nearly succeeded where strength had been unsuccessful. The Regent's incredible curiosity was very nearly followed by fatal consequences, and his liberty was preserved in the following manner:

A woman who had recently arrived in Paris, and whose beauty was remarkable, was living in furnished apartments of the Rue du Pont-aux-Choux. She received many visits; at times her visitor was an abbé or an officer; at others a countryman or a bourgeois. Her neighbours, who took her for a woman of dissolute life, felt little astonishment at the number of her acquaintances; but one of them discovered that this profusion of adorers was but apparent, and that only one man, under different disguises, visited the unknown. He informed the lieutenant of police of his discovery; and

this official was about to order the woman's arrest when a terrible uproar was heard in her room. The door was forced open, and the lady was found struggling with a man dressed as a musketeer, whom the neighbours again identified under the thick moustache he had added to his disguise, and who spoke with a foreign accent. It appeared that jealousy was the cause of the scene, for the woman threatened the man who, judging by appearances, was her lover, with a dagger she held in her hand. The police were sent for; but the musketeer managed to escape; and the policemen having failed to question her on the spot, when she was excited and might have spoken the truth, she afterwards gave only vague and mendacious information. The lieutenant of police condemned her to imprisonment at the general hospital, after being publicly whipped. This punishment was usually inflicted by the executioner's assistants. On the day after it was inflicted, Charles Sanson remarked with astonishment that the assistant who had been employed on the occasion wore a signet ring of great value; he also noticed that the man blushed when he looked at him. Hereupon Sanson demanded how the jewel was in his possession; the assistant with some hesitation answered that the unfortunate woman had resisted, and that the ring and a small diamond had fallen from her hair; he took possession of the jewels; and as the woman after the infliction was being led to the hospital, she told him in a low voice that she had seen him, but that she did not intend to denounce him, and should even give him the small diamond if he would

take the ring to a merchant named Planta, at the Duke de Richelieu's mansion, and that he should be amply remunerated by him; she also begged him to ask the man to whom she sent him not to forget her.

The improbability of this quality of merchant attributed to the owner of a ring of which the crest was surmounted with an earl's coronet, struck Sanson. He severely scolded his assistant, and immediately took the ring to the lieutenant of police. The woman was confronted with the executioner's assistant, and, when she was threatened with torture, she volunteered a full confession. Her name was Antoinette Sicard. She was M. de Schlieben's mistress, and had come with him from Bayonne to Paris. She had vaguely heard of grand projects which were to be for her lover a source of great wealth; he had once brought with him to her room an Italian with whom he was on intimate terms. In the course of the dinner they laughed at the simplicity of a person whose name they did not pronounce, who had consented to go and see the devil, at night, in the pits of Vanves, when it was so easy for him to enjoy the sight in his own palace by looking at himself in a mirror.

These revelations were communicated to the Abbé Dubois. He had heard of the Regent's absurd intention, and had vainly besought his master to renounce his contemplated journey. The discovery which (thanks to the intervention of Charles Sanson) the lieutenant of police had just made, confirmed the suspicions he already entertained. He ordered the arrest of the 'devil' and

his companion, but they both took to flight. The Italian took refuge in Spain. De Schlieben, less fortunate, was taken just as he was about to cross the frontier. Those who captured him took him back to Paris in a stage-coach without saying a word of their mission to the other passengers. When the coach arrived in Paris, it drove into the Bastille.

Schlieben's ring remained in Charles Sanson's possession; it was the only reward he received for the service he had rendered the State.

CHAPTER VII.

COUNT DE HORN.

COUNT ANTOINE-JOSEPH DE HORN was the scion of a princely race; and he was connected with the highest nobility of Europe. At the time when speculation, under Law's auspices, was raging in Paris, and the temptation of gain was leading astray many persons of position and family, Count de Horn was living in the capital the life of a young lord of fashion and fortune. The sensation which was produced may easily be imagined when it was heard that he had been arrested and put under lock and key under the twofold charge of having murdered, in company with a Piedmontese, called the Chevalier de Milhe, and a third unknown person, a Jew who speculated in the shares of the Royal Bank, in order to rob him of a pocket-book which contained a sum of 100,000 livres.

The murder was perpetrated in a tavern of the Rue Quincampoix, where, it was alleged, Count de Horn and his accomplices had made an appointment with the Jew, under pretence of purchasing the shares he had in his pocket, but in reality to steal them from him.

The greatest agitation prevailed at Court in con-

sequence of this affair, owing to the illustrious rank of the accused, and of his connection with the loftiest aristocracy of the land. De Horn's trial was pursued with unprecedented rapidity, and it seems as if the numerous steps taken to save the young man's life only hurried his fate. When his parents heard of his incarceration, they lost no time in moving heaven and earth on his behalf. On the eve of the trial, a large number of his kinsmen assembled in the Palais de Justice, and waited for the members of the court, to bow to them as they passed, by way of commending the accused to their indulgence. This imposing manifestation, undertaken by the first seigneurs of France, produced no effect: the court of La Tournelle sentenced Count de Horn and the Chevalier de Milhe to be broken on the wheel, and left there until death should follow.

This sentence filled the young man's friends and parents with terror and surprise. They sent to the Regent a petition in which it was represented that Count de Horn's father was mad, that his kinsman Prince Ferdinand de Ligne was in a similar condition, that lunacy was a common ailing in his family, and that the young man must have committed the crime when of unsound mind. Among those who signed the petition were Prince Claude de Ligne, Marquis d'Harcourt, the Earl of Egmont, the Duke de la Trémouille, the Duke de la Force, the Archbishop of Cambray, Prince de Soubise, the Princess de Gonzague, and many others of the same rank. All the facts adduced in this petition were certainly authentic. The great race of the Princes de Horn and Ovérisque

had given many examples of mental aberration. All the subscribers of the petition went in a body to the Palais Royal; but the Regent only consented to receive a deputation. He was inflexible with regard to a reprieve; and it was with much difficulty that he consented to a commutation of the sentence into decapitation. He could only be moved by being reminded that he was himself related to the culprit through his mother the Princess Palatine. How he kept his promise will be seen hereafter.

This obstinacy on the part of the Regent was much commented upon. Personal animosity was said to be the cause. M. de Horn, being young, handsome, and captivating, had been something of a lady-killer. Now, morality was not the distinguishing feature of Philip d'Orléans' Court, and it was said that several beauties in fashion had regarded the foreign young lord with more than ordinary favour. Mdme. de Parabère's name was particularly mentioned; and it was related that the Regent had once surprised M. de Horn in conversation with the beautiful marchioness. In his fury the prince showed him the door, saying, 'Sortez'—to which the Count made the proud and appropriate answer: 'Monseigneur, nos ancêtres auraient dit, sortons.' To this adventure, whether real or invented, was attributed the Regent's hatred for Count de Horn, whose life he had sworn to sacrifice. It is not my business to discuss this question. What was most certain was that Law, the minister of finance, and Dubois, the prime minister, showed themselves the bitterest foes of Count de Horn. The influence of the

shares of the Royal Bank and of the Mississippi was diminishing; and they were in hopes that this might be mended by a display of unparalleled severity for the punishment of a murder committed with the object of taking possession of some of these shares.

Shortly afterwards, Charles Sanson received a visit from the Marquis de Créqy, the nobleman who had been the instigator and leader of all the attempts made to save the unfortunate youth. He seemed convinced that the Regent would keep his word, and showed him a letter in which the Duke de Saint-Simon expressed his conviction that Count de Horn would be decapitated. The Marquis added that his royal highness had also promised that the execution should take place in the court of the Conciergerie, to spare the culprit the shame of being led through the crowd. The only thing was to spare the unhappy young man as many sufferings as possible. M. de Créqy expressed a wish to see the sword which was to be used for his execution; he turned pale when my ancestor produced the broad double-edged blade, sharp and flashing, which could hardly be styled a weapon. On one side was engraved the word *Justitïa*; on the other a wheel, emblem of torture. It was the sword with which the Chevalier de Rohan had been decapitated.

M. de Créqy could hardly refrain from weeping when he begged Charles Sanson to be as lenient as possible in the execution of his fearful mission, to uncover only the neck of the victim, and to wait until he received the priest's absolution before giving him the fatal blow.

The conversation then turned to the measures to be taken for the remittance of the body, which M. de Créqy claimed in the name of the family. He requested my ancestor to procure a padded coffin wherein to place the remains of De Horn, which were then to be taken away in a carriage sent expressly for the purpose. Charles Sanson promised to see to the accomplishment of these lugubrious details.

When he left, M. de Créqy, wishing to reward my ancestor for the services he asked, presented him with 100 louis, and insisted on his accepting the gift. But Charles Sanson firmly refused. M. de Créqy appeared moved, and retired. I may be forgiven for dwelling with some complacency on this trait of disinterestedness on the part of one of those who preceded me in the office I held for many years; it may be considered as an answer to the charge of cupidity which has been launched at a profession which did not appear sufficiently soiled by blood.

Only a few hours had elapsed since the visit of the Marquis de Créqy, when Charles Sanson received the order to take, on the next morning at six o'clock, from the Conciergerie, Count Antoine de Horn; to convey him to the Place de Grève, after passing through the torture-chamber, and carry out the sentence of Parliament in its cruel tenour. My ancestor's expectation was justified; the Regent did not keep his word; Law and Dubois had won the day against the Duke de Saint-Simon and the nobility.

To my ancestor's extreme surprise, the sentence did

not even contain the secret restriction of a *retentum*, which spared horrible sufferings to the accused, by ordering the executioner to strangle him before breaking his limbs. How could he now keep the promise he had made to the Marquis de Créqy? Charles Sanson passed the night in anything but pleasant reflections.

It was broad daylight when my ancestor arrived at the Conciergerie with his sinister cortége. He immediately entered the prison, and was conducted to a lower room in which were the Count de Horn and M. de Milhe, who had just been tortured. Both were horribly mangled, for they had supported the boot to the eighth spike. The Count was extremely pale. He cast a haggard look around him, and kept speaking to his companion, who seemed much more resigned and listened with religious attention to the priest who was consoling him. As to M. de Horn, instead of being plunged in the state of prostration which usually followed the abominable sufferings he had just borne, he gesticulated with feverish animation and pronounced incoherent words which almost seemed to justify what had been alleged in his defence concerning the unsoundness of his mind. He violently repulsed the priest, who was dividing his attention between the two sufferers, and repeatedly asked for Monsignor François de Lorraine, Bishop of Bayeux, from whom he had received the communion the day before.

The fatal moment came. The culprits were carried to the executioner's cart. Charles Sanson sat down next to the Count, while the priest continued speaking

to the Piedmontese. Seeing the unhappy young man's extreme agitation, my ancestor thought he might quiet him by giving him some hope, even were that hope to remain unrealised.

'My lord,' he said, 'there is perhaps some hope. Your relations are powerful.'

The prisoner violently interrupted him. 'They have abandoned me,' he exclaimed; 'the Bishop—where is the Bishop? He promised to return.'

'Who knows?' my ancestor ventured to say; 'reprieve may yet come.'

The young man's lips turned up contemptuously. 'If they wanted to spare my life, they would not have crippled me in this fashion,' he replied, bitterly, casting a look at his lacerated legs and feet.

Charles Sanson says in his notes that he really hoped and expected that some attempt would be made to save De Horn. But nothing occurred. The Pont-au-Change was passed, and in another minute the cortége reached the Place de Grève. The Count looked at Sanson reproachfully as if upbraiding him for what he had said; but he was now quite collected and the fear of death had left him.

At length the cart stopped at the foot of the scaffold. The culprits, owing to the torture they had undergone, could not move unaided. Charles Sanson therefore took Count de Horn in his arms and carried him up the steps. At the same time he whispered in his ear the advice that he should ask permission to make revelations, as a means of gaining time; but the unfortunate young man had again

lost his self-possession and gave vent to incoherent exclamations. 'I knew they would not allow the Bishop to come,' he said; . . . 'they have arrested him because he had shares also. But I shall sell my life dearly; only give me arms! . . . . they cannot refuse to give me arms!' . . .

While he was thus expressing himself, Charles Sanson stepped back, motioning to his assistants to begin their work which consisted in tying him to the plank on which he was to be broken. When this was done, the priest, who had just left the Piedmontese, approached De Horn: 'My son,' he said, 'renounce the sentiments of anger and revenge which trouble your last moments. Only think of God: He is the sovereign author of all justice, if you appear before Him with a contrite and humbled heart.'

The Count at length seemed moved, and he joined in the priest's prayer. As to my ancestor, he remembered M. de Créqy's request as to priestly absolution, and in this respect his conscience was firm; but he had also promised not to make the young man suffer. In an instant he decided on the course he should adopt. Simulating sudden illness, he passed his iron bar to Nicolas Gros, his oldest assistant, took the thin rope used for the secret executions of the *retentum*, passed it round the Count's neck, and before Gros had raised the heavy bar wherewith he was about to break the culprit's limbs, he pulled the rope, and thus spared him the most atrocious sufferings ever devised by human cruelty.

On the other hand, the Chevalier de Milhe, who was being broken, uttered wild shrieks. In vain did the

priest wipe the perspiration from his brow, and pour a few drops of water into his mouth. Charles Sanson was struck with the inequality of the sufferings of the two men, and told Gros to give him the *coup de grâce*—the blow which broke the chest.

Gros obeyed, but not without casting an uneasy look at the commissaire, who was viewing the execution from the balcony of the Hôtel-de-ville. No doubt the latter cared little for executions of this kind, of which, perhaps, he had seen but too many, for he perceived nothing. At this moment the priest, surprised not to hear the cries of Count de Horn, returned to exhort him to repentance: he saw that death had forestalled him. The rope was still hanging from the young man's neck, and my ancestor hastened to conceal it while the ecclesiastic was standing between the Hôtel-de-ville and himself; then, placing a finger on his lips, he solicited the priest's discretion.

Both passed the remainder of the day beside the mangled remains. Shortly after the execution, a carriage drawn by six horses, preceded by a mounted servant, and followed by six servants in gorgeous livery, entered the Place de Grève. It was the Duke de Croy d'Havré, whose arms could be descried on the panels of his carriage through the black crape which covered it. He was soon followed by three other carriages, which stopped on the north side of the square. They were all in deep mourning, as also the harness of the horses and the liveries of the servants. The blinds were closed, as much to avoid public curiosity as to conceal the cruel sight of the scaffold.

But it was whispered in the crowd that the last comers were the Prince de Ligne, the Duke de Rohan, and a Croüy, the last scion of the illustrious race of Arpad, which traced its origin to Attila, and put forth more legitimate rights to the crown of Hungary than the house of Hapsburg.

My ancestor was surprised not to see the Marquis de Créqy. But his astonishment was short-lived, for a rumour at the other end of the Place announced the arrival of two other carriages, in an apparel still more pompous. They drove up to the other carriages and took up a position in the same line. The Marquis de Créqy stepped out, and advanced on to the square clad in the uniform of a colonel-general and general inspector of the King's armies, and wearing the insignias of the Golden Fleece, the grand crosses of Saint-Louis and Saint-Jean of Jerusalem. His countenance bore the traces of profound grief. He traversed the Grève with a firm step; the crowd stepped back respectfully before this great personage, who was one of Louis XIV.'s godsons.

As soon as the commissaire saw M. de Créqy, he retired from the balcony of the Hôtel-de-ville, as if only waiting for this final protest to bring the scene to a conclusion. This meant that justice was satisfied. The Marquis walked straight up to my ancestor with a severe face, and looking at him almost threateningly:

'Well, sir,' said he, in a stern voice, 'what of your promise?'

'Monseigneur,' answered Charles Sanson, 'at eight

o'clock this morning M. le Comte de Horn was dead, and the bar of my assistant struck a dead body.'

The priest confirmed my ancestor's words.

'Well,' said M. de Créqy, in a milder tone, 'our house shall remember that if it could obtain nothing from the clemency of the Regent and from the justice of Parliament, it is at least indebted to the humanity of the executioner.'

The Count's body was then untied and taken to one of the carriages. It was so mutilated that the limbs seemed ready to separate from the trunk. As a protest against the cruelty of the sentence, M. de Créqy insisted on holding one of the legs, which only adhered to the corpse by the skin. When this was done the carriages moved away in a file, and stopped before the house of the Countess de Montmorency-Lagny, *nce* De Horn, where the Count's remains were placed in a bier and deposited in a chapel. It remained there for two days, surrounded by a numerous clergy who sang the mass of the dead. Meanwhile Prince François de Lorraine, Bishop of Bayeux, had returned to Paris. He expressed much grief at having been unable to attend his unfortunate kinsman to the scaffold, thinking that the execution was to take place at a later date. He nevertheless arrived in time to join his prayers to those of the clergy, and, in company with MM. de Créqy and de Plessis-Bellière, he escorted the body to the Castle of Baussigny, in the Netherlands, where the Prince de Horn, eldest brother of the defunct, and head of the family, usually resided.

This extraordinary affair greatly irritated the highest personages of the State against the Regent and his favourites: it proved of no assistance to Law, whose fall was unavoidable. On his return from his country-seat the Duke de Saint-Simon hastened to write to the Duke d'Havré to express his regret at what had occurred, and to say how he himself had been deceived by the false promises of the Duke d'Orléans.

I quote here the Duke d'Havré's answer, because it not only expressed the sentiments of all the French nobility, but it corroborates what I have said concerning Charles Sanson's conduct:

'My dear Duke,—I accept with gratitude, and I understand quite well, the regret you are kind enough to express. I do not know whether the Marquis de Parabère or the Marquis de Créqy obtained of the executioner of Paris the charity which is attributed to him; but what I do know is that the death of Count de Horn is the result of a false policy, of the financial operations of the Government, and, perhaps, also of the policy of the Duke d'Orléans. You know my sentiments of consideration for you. CROY D'HAVRÉ.'

Was Count de Horn really innocent? We have no right to judge the merits of those it was our mission to put to death. Nevertheless I have taken the liberty to allude to the rumours which were current at the time of De Horn's arrest, and which made him out to be the victim of the Regent's personal animosity. Another version

tended to establish his innocence, or, at least, so to diminish his responsibility in the Jew's murder, that, were the version correct, the sentence he suffered could only be regarded as a monstrous iniquity. It was said that M. de Horn and the Chevalier de Milhe had not made an appointment with the Jew with the intention of murdering and robbing him, but merely with the object of obtaining from him a large sum in shares of the Bank which the Count had really entrusted to him; that not only did the Jew deny the deposit, but that he went so far as to strike Antoine de Horn in the face. Upon this the young man, who was hot-blooded and passionate, seized a knife that lay on the table and wounded the Jew in the shoulder. It was De Milhe who finished him and took the pocket-book, of which the Count refused to have a share. If the affair occurred in this way, it must be acknowledged that the Regent, and the magistrates who served his hatred, had a heavy reckoning to answer for.

CHAPTER VIII.

CARTOUCHE.

ON October 15, 1721, Paris was in a fever of excitement. The whole population was crowding the streets; in shops, taverns, and even in drawing-rooms, people greeted each other with this phrase, which nevertheless met with much incredulity:

'Cartouche is captured.'

'Barbier's Journal' related the capture in the following terms:

'15th.—Great News in Paris!—I have spoken before of one Cartouche, a notorious robber who was sought for everywhere and was found nowhere. It was thought to be a fable. His existence is only too real. This morning at eleven o'clock he was taken; but never was a thief more honoured.

'Words attributed to him inspired fear in the Regent, so that secret orders were given for his apprehension; and the report was spread in Paris that he had left the capital, that he had died at Orleans, and even that he was a myth, so that he should not imagine that he was being looked for.

'He has been discovered through a robbery he com-

mitted at an innkeeper's with three of his companions, and also at the instigation of a patrol soldier who sold him. Pekom, major of the guards, who knew that he was acquainted with Cartouche, took him to the Châtelet to be dealt with by justice, unless he gave information concerning Cartouche. The soldier consented and acted as a spy. M. le Blanc, Secretary of State for War, who conducted the whole affair, took with him forty picked soldiers and a number of policemen, who had orders to take Cartouche dead or alive; that is, to fire upon him if he tried to run away.

'Cartouche had gone to bed on that day at six o'clock, at a wine dealer's of La Courtille, and he was lying in bed, with six pistols on the table. The house was surrounded, and fortunately he was captured while still in bed; otherwise he might have killed some one.

'He was bound with ropes, and taken to M. le Blanc's, who did not see him, because he was ill; but M. le Blanc's brothers and the Marquis de Tresnel, his son-in-law, saw him in the court, among numerous officers and clerks who were there. He was then taken afoot to the Châtelet, so that the people might see him, and know of the capture.

'It is said that Cartouche was insolent, and gnashed his teeth, and that he said they should not hold him long. The people believe him to be something of a sorcerer; but as for me, I think that cannot prevent him from being broken on the wheel.

'He has been thus taken to the Châtelet, escorted by a large concourse of people. He has been put in a

cell, attached to a pillar, for fear he should attempt to break his head against the walls, and the door is guarded by four men. Never were such precautions taken before. He is to be questioned to-morrow. . . .

'It is said that he answers readily, and that he maintains that he is not Cartouche; that his name is Jean Bourguignon, and that he comes from Bar-le-Duc.'

One may judge from the above document how Cartouche was feared by the population which, during ten years, he had robbed with a good fortune only equalled by his audacity.

I do not share an opinion expressed in another quarter, that the deeds of all the ruffians who at the time swarmed in the capital were combined in this legendary figure, nor that the people, ever greedy of extraordinary occurrences, used to attribute to Cartouche the crimes of the great criminals of the period, such as Balagny-le-Capucin, Dantragues, Louis Marcant, Rozy-le-Craqueur, Charles Blanchard, Pierrot-le-Bossu, and, above all, Pélissier *alias* Boileau, a famous criminal who was hanged in 1722, and who had almost as many titles as Cartouche to the sad notoriety which belonged to the latter.

I will prove this by giving a nomenclature of the executions which form the subject of the following chapter. Never were robberies, burglaries, and attacks on the high road so numerous as from 1715 to 1725. It seemed as if one half of Paris were robbing the other half.

This fever of rapine and crime was only natural. The Regency was a period of social transformation.

The public mind, compressed by the severe autocracy of Louis XIV., was awaking, and, in its reaction against the asceticism of the last years of the reign of the *Roi Soleil*, it had no higher aspiration than a craving for the satisfaction of its material appetites. A kind of frenzy possessed the nation. Honour, the former object of her veneration, was replaced by pleasure; and licence, the result of a relaxation of manners, had rapidly spread through the lower classes of society. The system which could in the course of a day enrich the poor, and ruin the rich, initiated noblemen, bourgeois, and men of the people into the emotions of gambling. The shrine of Hazard was substituted for that of patient work and resigned probity. This fever of riches, this thirst for pleasures and ups and downs in fortune, filled Paris with a flock of disappointed adventurers, ruined gamblers, and unsatisfied libertines, ready to seek in crime the pleasures which a regular life could not afford them. The luxury of servants had increased enormously, and in their ranks the army of disorder found numerous and willing recruits. It also found elements in the army, and even among an ill-organised and undisciplined police.

It was thus that individual and organised banditism was enabled to engage in an open struggle with society, oppose strength to the strength used to destroy it, and persevere with impunity, during many years, in its depredations and outrages.

Cartouche has remained the ideal of the thieves of the eighteenth century. In the sphere of crime he is the exact image of the period of transition during which

he lived. In this miscreant's person there is much of the brigand of the middle ages and, at the same time, of the thief of our times. Like the former, he has frequent recourse to brutal strength, but he prefers stratagem, of which he is a master. He has the intuition of all the improvements introduced by his successors in the art of appropriating other people's property; and it may be said that he is the precursor of thieves of our generation.

Cartouche's biography, which has been frequently written, does not come within my province. He only belongs to me from the time when the law handed him over to that one of my ancestors who then wielded the sword of justice. I will therefore say but a few words concerning Cartouche's birth and life, and relate a few anecdotes which I find in my notes.

Cartouche, who was the son of a cooper, passed his youth in that quarter of Paris called the Marais. After being a bohemian, a recruiter, and a soldier, he returned to Paris in 1715. His biographers say that peace cast him penniless on the King's pavement. It appears to me more probable that he deserted the ranks. What is quite accurate is the tradition which attributes to this singular man the powers of organisation of a general, and shows us this Cæsar of the highway at the head of a legion in which he had established a kind of military hierarchy and a unity of command and action; he had accomplished spies in all ranks of society, and his army had even its surgeons.

Thus organised against an almost powerless police,

Cartouche's gang put society in such peril that protracted impunity might have given it the proportions of a public calamity. Thieves were so numerous, night attacks were so frequent, that no one ventured out of doors after dark without an escort, and caravans were organised to cross the bridges or to go along the quays; the waylayers acted with such *ensemble* and upon plans so well combined that all their attacks were crowned with success. Otherwise it would be hard to explain the prodigious number of their misdeeds.

Cartouche's strength and audacity, his ingenious fecundity of stratagems, his extraordinary agility, the energy with which he endured privations and fatigues, and above all his really superior intellect, naturally designated him as the leader of gangs of thieves. Certain adventures in which members of the aristocracy played a part, gave him notoriety; a daring escape and many singular exploits established his celebrity, and made him almost popular.

The robbery committed on the Archbishop of Bourges was the subject of public conversation and caused considerable amusement at Court. Monseigneur was travelling when, in the neighbourhood of Saint Denis, he was waylaid and robbed by Cartouche's men. They took from him his pastoral cross, his pontifical ring, ten louis he had in his purse, and two bottles of Tokay. It was said that the thieves had taken the Abbé Cerutti, who accompanied the archbishop, and was young and handsome, for a disguised

lady, and that, as Monseigneur de Bourges was much offended by the suggestion, Cartouche had beaten his subordinate, saying, 'This will teach you to respect the clergy!' Mdme. la Marquise de Beauffremont was also the heroine of an adventure with Cartouche. It was alleged that she distributed safe-conducts and was on good terms with Cartouche, for the following cause: One night, after returning from a ball, she sent away her maids, and began to write by her fireside. She suddenly heard a noise in her chimney, and soon after a man, armed to the teeth, tumbled in the room amidst a cloud of soot, dust, and sparrows' nests. As, in his fall, the visitor had sent the burning logs about the floor, he took the tongs, and mindless of the effect produced by his singular way of entering, he methodically replaced all the wood in the grate, and then turning to Mdme. de Beauffremont:

'May I venture to ask, madam,' said he, 'whom I have the honour of addressing?'

'Sir,' stammered the Marchioness, trembling with fear, 'I am Mdme. de Beauffremont; but as I do not know you at all, and as you have not the looks of a thief, I cannot guess why you gain access to my room in the dead of the night and down the chimney.'

'Madam,' answered the unknown visitor, 'in coming here I was not precisely aware of the nature of the house into which I was compelled to intrude. And to shorten a visit which, I have no doubt, is not of your liking, allow me to ask you to have the kindness to accompany me as far as the gate of your mansion.'

As he spoke, he drew a pistol from his belt, and took up a candle.

'But, sir'——

'Madam, have the goodness to be quick,' he added, cocking his pistol. 'We must descend together, and you will be good enough to request the porter to open the gate.'

'Do not speak so loud, sir; the Marquis de Beauffremont might hear you!' said the frightened lady.

'Put on your cloak, madam. It is freezing, and you might catch cold.'

Things took place as the audacious visitor desired. Mdme. de Beauffremont was so frightened that she sank in a chair in the porter's lodge after the man passed the threshold of the mansion. She then heard a tap at the porter's window, and the voice of the strange visitor was heard saying:

'Monsieur le Suisse, I have walked three or four miles on the roofs of houses during the night to escape from the policemen who were after me. Do not go and inform your master that there was any impropriety in being in this house; otherwise you shall be dealt with by Cartouche.'

Mdme. de Beauffremont returned to her room and awoke her husband, who told her she must have been dreaming. Two or three days after this adventure she received a letter of apology and thanks, written in very respectful and choice terms, which enclosed a safe-conduct for Mdme. de Beauffremont and an authorisation to deliver similar documents to members of her

family. With the letter came a small box containing a fine diamond which was estimated at 6,000 livres, which sum Mdme. de Beauffremont hastened to present to the Hôtel-Dieu.

An anecdote which may appear more authentic is the trick Cartouche played at the expense of the chief officer of patrols, whom he deprived of his silver forks and spoons in broad daylight. One day, at twelve o'clock, as this officer was sitting down at table, the door was thrown open, and he saw a magnificent carriage flanked with two tall servants standing near his window. A stiff and self-possessed old man stepped out, and, announcing himself as an Englishman of distinction, he asked to see the chief officer. He was introduced to the dining-room. Perceiving that dinner was on the table, he apologised profusely, declined to take a seat, and having, he remarked in an accent which could leave no doubt as to his nationality, only a few words to say, he took the officer to a corner of the apartment, placing himself so that the latter should turn his back to the windows.

After relating how an anonymous letter had warned him that his house was to be attacked on the following night, after asking for sentries and promising a hundred guineas to the policemen if they captured the famous Cartouche, for whom the generous old Englishman expressed the most profound hatred, he left his host, who, much pleased at the prospect of a connection with so rich a man, insisted on escorting him to his carriage, and looked at the fine set-out as it disappeared round the street corner.

He was disturbed in his contemplation by the cries of his servants, who had just discovered that not a single spoon or fork remained on the table.

Cartouche, for it was no other, had acted his part so well, that the officer defended his visitor against the accusations of his servants, and maintained that he had not even approached the table. But soldiers in the court had seen the noble stranger's people carelessly leaning against the open window; the table being at a short distance from the window, it was probable that while the counterfeit Englishman was engaging the chief officer's attention, the tall footmen, stretching out their arms, had taken the silver plate.

A few minutes after, these suspicions were confirmed. A commissionaire brought to the chief officer a dozen forks and spoons of the finest tin, in place of those he had lost.

The salient feature of all Cartouche's acts was the witty frolic which was inseparable from them. The thief was not content with despoiling his victims; he laughed at them in the most disagreeable manner. This was, perhaps, the secret of his renown; Cartouche understood that much would be forgiven if he amused those who feared him.

It was on October 27 that Charles Sanson saw Cartouche for the first time. He was still at the Châtelet, and there was a large crowd before the entrance of the prison. Everybody wished to say, 'I have seen him!' and permission to visit the bandit was solicited as a great favour. Women were especially eager to have a peep at

him; the Regent's mistress, Madame de Parabère, was one of the first who scanned his features.

Charles Sanson was perhaps the only man who had a right to be more patient; but the lightness of sentiments which characterised the times possessed even the executioner; he could not resist the solicitations of a few friends who asked to accompany him, and he failed to understand that it was neither fair nor charitable to appear prematurely before a man who was doomed to meet him on the scaffold. In his notes, Charles Sanson says that Cartouche looked forty—a statement which does not agree with the date of his birth, but which can be explained by the effect produced on his appearance by the passions, debaucheries, and fatigues of his profession. His head between the ears was extraordinarily developed; his hair was thin and shaggy, and the eye was not wanting in malice. He was of rather low stature, but thinness made him look taller than he really was. 'We examined him with surprise,' adds my ancestor, 'so astonished were we that a man so ugly should have been represented as a woman-killer. He looked joyful and in good health, and when one of our number asked him whether he really was Cartouche, he shrugged his shoulders, and sung a chorus in the language of thieves.'

Cartouche recognised his grim visitor; he was rather troubled, but he soon recovered from his agitation, and, showing more gaiety than he had hitherto displayed, he pointed to the executioner's stick, and asked him if he had brought it to take his measure.

An attempt at escape, which was nearly successful, induced the authorities to transfer Cartouche to the Conciergerie. He was in a cell with another prisoner, who happened to be a mason. They made a hole in a sewer gallery. They fell into the water, waded their way to the end of the gallery, and, having removed a very large stone, they emerged in the cellar of a greengrocer. They went up to the shop, but, unfortunately for the fugitives, the greengrocer's dog began to bark furiously. The servant heard the noise, opened the window, and shrieked for help; the greengrocer came down with a light, and would have allowed them to run away, but four policemen, who were in the neighbourhood, ran up, entered the shop, and recognised Cartouche, who had chains to his feet and hands. They took him back to prison with his companion, and henceforth he was watched with the utmost vigilance.

Cartouche's trial was soon concluded. On November 26 was passed a sentence by which Louis Dominique Cartouche, *alias* Lamarre, *alias* Petit, *alias* Bourguignon; Jacques Maire, Jean Pierre Balagny, Pierre François Guthrus, Duchâtelet, and Charles Blanchard, were condemned to be broken, after suffering the *question ordinaire et extraordinaire*. Two minor accomplices of Cartouche, Magdelaine and Messier, were sentenced to be hanged.

On the next day, November 27, Cartouche was tortured. He suffered the 'boot' with extraordinary firmness, and refused to make any confession. Meanwhile the 'carpenter' had been ordered to erect five wheels

and two gibbets on the Place de Grève. It was known at large that Cartouche was to be executed on that day: the streets were crowded, and windows on the Grève had been let at a high price. Whether it was because the magistrates did not care to satisfy public curiosity, or because the other culprits were not in a state to appear on the scaffold, I do not know; but at two o'clock in the afternoon, four of the wheels and one of the gibbets were taken down, one gibbet being left to hang the effigy of a man named Camus, sentenced *in contumaciam*. Towards four o'clock Charles Sanson went to the Conciergerie, accompanied by his assistants; and the clerk of the court, after reading the sentence to the culprit, handed him over to the executioner.

Cartouche was very pale; but neither the sufferings he had endured nor approaching death made any impression on his hardened soul. Public curiosity had borne fruit; Cartouche thought he was a hero. He was about to ascend the steps of the scaffold, as the gladiators of Rome appeared before the Cæsar, and he wished to die amidst the applause of the people.

After he was placed in the cart, Charles Sanson uttered the traditional exclamation by which the last act of justice was announced, and the cortége set out. On the way, Cartouche, who was stretched at the bottom of the cart with his head resting against the seat occupied by the executioner, manifested great impatience. He repeatedly attempted to turn round, and at length he asked my ancestor whether the other carts were preceding theirs. His agitation became extreme.

When the cart reached the Place de Grève, he made an effort, rose and looked at the scaffold. When he saw that only one wheel was erected, he turned pale, large drops fell from his brow, and he repeated several times '*Les frollants, les frollants!*' (the traitors). He obviously expected to be executed in good company, and his courage was vanishing. As a means of prolonging his life, he said he wished to confess his crimes, and he was taken to the Hôtel-de-Ville. Meanwhile the scaffold remained standing, and the crowd that had congregated to see the execution did not disperse. On the following morning Cartouche was again handed over to Charles Sanson: but he was an altered man; he no longer made a show of his cynicism, and although his firmness was not impaired, it had lost all appearance of bravado. His instincts, however, appeared again; when he was placed on the 'Croix de St. André,' and the dull thud of the iron bar descending on his limbs was heard, Cartouche exclaimed in a stentorian voice, as if counting the blows, 'One!'

But he relapsed into silence. Many as were the crimes of Cartouche, he had the benefit of *retentum*, a clause which stipulated that the culprit should be strangled after a certain number of blows; but the clerk of the court was so confused that he forgot to mention the fact to the executioner. Cartouche was so strong that it required eleven blows to break him, and I can affirm that, contrary to what was stated in the *procès verbal* of the execution, he lived more than twenty minutes after being placed on the wheel.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ACCOMPLICES OF CARTOUCHE.

If Cartouche had been able to guess the future, he might have seen that the fate of his accomplices was no better than his. On the fourth day after the execution of the celebrated bandit, Balagny and a few others took their place on the ignominious and barbarous wheel which was the certain end of anti-social lives. They gave information as to their accomplices, and made, at the foot of the scaffold, confessions which torture had failed to elicit from them.

They implicated so many persons, that another series of trials began, which lasted as long as the declarations of convicted prisoners compromised other persons, and threw new light on the immense ramifications of an association of miscreants which had for many years defied the police. More than sixty persons were under lock and key at the time of the execution of Cartouche and Balagny. This number increased every day in consequence of the confession of those who hoped to save their lives by denouncing their accomplices, and in June of the following year it rose to one hundred and fifty. The execution of Louis Marcant took place in March, that of Rozy in June; and all this blood, instead of

washing the affair away, seemed rather to make it more serious. Each day brought to light some new discovery; and this shows how profoundly mistaken were those who denied that Cartouche, the centre and wire-puller of this horrible association, possessed the organising spirit without which he could not have extended this immense net over the Parisian society.

Rozy revealed more than any of those who suffered before him. On the night which followed his last interrogatory before execution eighty persons were arrested and taken to the Conciergerie. M. Arnauld de Boueix, the instructing judge, questioned them during no less than thirty-two consecutive hours. This magistrate showed extreme zeal and firmness. Some even accused him of excessive rigour and even cruelty. This was easy to account for. M. Arnauld de Boueix was the son of a criminal lieutenant of Angouleme, who had come to Paris to watch a lawsuit, and who, on his return home, had been murdered on the high-road. Hence M. Arnauld de Boueix's hatred for his father's murderers.

The most curious feature of Rozy's denunciations was that they seriously implicated two police officers named Leroux and Bourlon. Rozy maintained their complicity with the association, and also especially charged them with taking part in the murder of a poor poet named Vergier, who had been killed a year before in the Rue du Bout-du-Monde.

The enemies of the Regent—and they were many—sought to trace to him the responsibility of this murder; they said that Vergier was killed by mistake, that the

murderers, paid by the prince, thought they struck down Lagrange-Chancel, author of the 'Philippics,' a collection of satires which had caused him the greatest irritation. This calumny was not credited, and it no doubt induced the Regent to show indulgence to the author of the verses, who, instead of rotting in a cell of the Bastille, as happened to Latude at Mdme. de Pompadour's instigation, was sent to the St. Marguerite isles, whence the poet escaped to Holland.

The arrest of Leroux and Bourlon caused some sensation. This, however, was not the first time that the police were found in connivance with thieves; but these two men were so warmly supported that their case attracted universal attention. M. d'Argenson, lieutenant of police, interposed on behalf of his employés; M. de la Vrillière, Secretary of State, in whose service Bourlon had once been, joined him in his efforts to extricate the two police officers. On the evening which followed their arrest, M. de Maurepas came with a lettre-de-cachet, to remove them from the Conciergerie to the Bastille. The gaoler, who thought he was under the order of the Parliament, refused to give them up. M. de Maurepas returned with another lettre-de-cachet which empowered him to take the gaoler with him if he persisted in his disobedience. The first president was then referred to; the latter referred to M. Amelot, president of La Tournelle; and these magistrates decided on handing over Bourlon and Leroux to M. de Maurepas, who took them to the Bastille. But on the next day the Parliament, ever jealous of its privileges, expressed much irritation and blamed the weak-

ness and timidity of its officials. After the sitting, they sent the procureur-général to the Palais Royal: the Regent declined to see them. At twelve o'clock President Amelot and two councillors came again. This time they were received. They humbly prayed his royal highness to appoint commissioners in order to finish the prosecution of Cartouche's gang, for, as far as they were concerned, they would immediately set free all the criminals who were still in prison. The prince was afraid of a great scandal, so he yielded, and Bourlon and Leroux were taken back to the Conciergerie. They probably escaped scot-free, for I do not find their names on Charles Sanson's dead-lists.

Still the scaffold and the gibbet were in constant use in the course of the year 1722, and it seemed as if the ramifications of the Cartouche association were endless. After the men came the turn of the women. As one may think, Cartouche was no puritan. He always had behind him a perfect seraglio, the members of which not only directed him but acted as powerful and useful auxiliaries. They had their part in his crimes, and it was deemed necessary that they should also have a share of the retribution.

Five of the principal mistresses of the notorious bandit were hanged in July 1722. One of them made a full confession, and, when tortured, implicated sixty persons. Most of the receivers of stolen goods were captured. Among them were large jewellers, well known in Paris, who hitherto had been taken for honest and influential tradesmen. The honour of the invention of *Moutonnage*,

which consists in obtaining the confessions of prisoners and thereby getting information from them, has been attributed to the modern police, particularly to Vidocq and his successors. The invention is not a commendable one; but I do not think that it belongs to our time. Police officers of a low order have always had recourse to such stratagems. Vidocq was especially clever in this way, because he was a peculiar individual; his antecedents and connections rendered him more apt than anybody else to gain the intimacy of malefactors. But Vidocq's system died with him; and if the celebrated police agent is still regarded as a giant in his own sphere, it must be acknowledged that his successors are dwarfs. Of course it is well known that these informers are necessary to the police; and they have been found in all times.

I hasten to add that the revelations which were made in the course of the executions of Cartouche's accomplices are quite different from modern confessions. Nowadays the prisoner is allured with a better treatment in prison, the hope of pecuniary remuneration and free pardon. Cartouche's accomplices were condemned, and never spoke during the investigation of this stupendous affair, which lasted two years. Many stoically suffered torture and did not confess; but their demeanour altered at the foot of the scaffold, their courage failed, and all the culprits asked to stop at the Hotel-de-Ville merely to prolong their lives. Cartouche, as we have seen, acted in the same way. However, he had chiefly strived to exonerate his brothers, maintaining that they

had taken no part in his crimes, because he would not allow them to join him in his expeditions. His generosity had no effect; his young brother, who was scarcely fifteen years of age, and whom he particularly loved, was sentenced to hard labour for life, and also to be suspended under the armpits for two hours on the Place de Grève. This new species of punishment was invented by M. Arnauld de Boueix. Hardly was the child suspended than he began to utter frightful shrieks, saying that he would rather die at once than suffer so much. Charles Sanson and his assistants were astonished and embarrassed, not knowing the effects of a kind of punishment to which they were not used; but as young Cartouche was said to be precociously wicked, they thought there was exaggeration in his complaints. Seeing, however, that his face was reddening, and that he could speak no longer, they freed him before the expiration of the two hours. He was taken to the Hotel-de-Ville, where he died without returning to consciousness.

This accident was much talked of; and M. Arnauld de Boueix was loudly taxed with cruelty. Tanton, uncle of the victim, was hanged on the same day.

In March 1723 trials were still going on. One of Cartouche's notorious accomplices was broken on the wheel. Like his predecessors, he halted at the Hotel-de-Ville and incriminated one hundred persons.

I have now done with this association, of which the existence has often been contested; but I must complete this chapter by rapidly enumerating a few other executions which took place at the time. The first was that

of Pélissier, a bold robber, who, disguised as a surgeon and a gendarme, had perpetrated crimes worthy of Cartouche himself. Having sufficiently 'worked,' he retired from 'business,' and went to Lyons, where he was living comfortably when he was arrested and transferred to Paris. His trial was soon concluded, although he denied that he had any accomplices. He had placed his fortune, which was considerable, in the Bank of Venice, and he was on the point of leaving France when he was arrested. His execution was one of the last by the hand of Charles Sanson. Although young, his health was rapidly declining, and a constitutional maladdy was fast leading him to an early grave. He was almost dying when, on May 24, 1726, he was, as it were, compelled to rise from his bed to watch the preparation of a punishment not frequently resorted to—burning. It was inflicted on Étienne Benjamin des Chauffours, a gentleman from Lorraine, for an infamous crime.

Charles Sanson did not survive this execution by many days. He died on September 12, 1726, at the age of forty-five. His widow gave him a superb funeral in the Church of St. Laurent. He left three children; the eldest was a girl, Anne-Renée Sanson, who married a man named Zelle, of Soissons; and two sons, Charles Jean-Baptiste Sanson and Nicolas Charles Gabriel Sanson; born, the first in April 1719, the second in 1721. The age of these two heirs of the sword of the law was an excellent opportunity for declining the bequest. Their mother judged otherwise, and took active steps to obtain

for Charles Jean-Baptiste the official investiture of the sinister office left vacant by his father, although he was only seven years old. This woman's severe face, of which I have a likeness, shows that she must have possessed a singular temper. She certainly had strange notions of the duties of maternity, for she did her utmost to obtain the post of executioner for the child. She was recommended by the criminal lieutenant and the procureur-général, and Charles Jean-Baptiste Sanson was appointed. During his minority, two questionnaires discharged the functions in his name; these were Georges Hérisson, who eventually became executioner of Melun, and a certain Prudhomme.

Although the child invariably accompanied his *locum tenens*, and was present at all executions to legalise them by his presence, he was too young to note his impressions as his father and grandfather had done. There is, therefore, a gap in these memoirs, which prevents me from alluding to several well-known executions.

CHAPTER X.

DAMIENS THE REGICIDE.

ONE evening, at the Palace of Versailles, Louis XV. was leaving the apartments of Mesdames, accompanied by the Dauphin and a part of the Court. He went down the flight of steps which led to the entrance of the palace, before which his carriage was waiting. It was bitterly cold; everybody was shivering, and the King, who was of a chilly disposition, wore two overcoats, one of which was lined with fur. As he was preparing to step into the carriage, a man rushed between the guards, forced back the Dauphin and the Duke d'Ayen, and struck the King, who exclaimed:

'Some one has given me a fearful blow!'

In the confusion caused by the double movement of the crowd that pressed forward to have a glimpse of the King, and the guards who kept them off, no one seemed to be aware of what had taken place. However, a footman who had seen the stranger place his hand on the King's shoulder, rushed upon him, and captured him, with the assistance of two other footmen.

The King passed his hand under his vest and perceived that he was wounded. At the same time he

turned round, and, seeing the man who had struck him, he exclaimed: 'He is the man; arrest him, but do him no harm!' After this, he returned to his apartments, supported by MM. de Brienne and de Richelieu.

The guards and the Switzers surrounded the murderer and led him to their guard-room. He was a tall man, from forty to forty-five years of age, with an aquiline and protuberant nose, deep-set eyes, and shaggy hair. He was so red in the face that even with the emotion he must have felt he did not appear pale. He was searched, and the weapon with which he had just struck the King was found in one of his pockets. It was a two-bladed knife, and he had used the larger blade. Thirty-seven louis of gold were also found, together with a book entitled, 'Christian Instructions and Prayers.'

When he was questioned, he said that his name was François Damiens, and that he had attempted to take the King's life for God and the people. A guard having asked him whether the money he had was the pay he received to perpetrate his crime, he refused to answer; but, apparently moved, he begged that the Dauphin should take care of himself and abstain from driving out of the Palace.

These words, which the man only uttered to increase his own importance, convinced the guards that Damiens was one of the agents of a vast plot which threatened the days of all the members of the Royal Family. In their excessive zeal they organised an extra-judicial interrogatory, and, forgetting that they were gentlemen

and officers, they disgraced themselves by torturing the murderer.

Meanwhile the King had been undressed and his wound was examined. The utmost uneasiness was felt in consequence of the great loss of blood, but the doctors soon ascertained that Louis was in no danger. Damiens' knife had encountered three garments, and no vital organ was injured. But the King, who at first had shown so much coolness, became very agitated when he heard one of his courtiers observe in a low voice that the blade might be poisoned. He sent twice to the murderer to know whether he had dipped his knife in some drug; and the monarch's apprehensions became so great that he asked for his confessor, insisted five or six times on receiving absolution, summoned the Dauphin, entrusted him with the presidency of the Council, and generally behaved like a man who is convinced that death is drawing near.

The King's terror filled the palace with consternation; it incited Damiens' improvised tormentors to display additional cruelty in the tortures they inflicted upon him. His answers hardly differed from those he subsequently gave. In an incoherent and vague manner he protested that he never intended to kill the King, but only to give him a 'good warning,' which would induce him not to persecute provincial parliaments, and to dismiss the Archbishop of Paris, who was the cause of the evil. Damiens was obviously a lunatic, or nearly so.

At this stage of the murderer's interrogatory, M. de Machault, keeper of the seals, arrived. His perplexity

was great. His own disgrace must follow the King's death; the Dauphin's severe principles leaving but little likelihood of his accepting a minister who had been Madame de Pompadour's creature. Forgetting all dignity and sense of humanity, the keeper of the seals joined the officers in the discharge of their disgusting work, and surpassed them in cruelty. He thrust tongs into the fire, and, when they were red-hot, he began singeing with his own hands the unfortunate Damiens' legs, taking care never to pinch the same part of the leg twice, so that more acute suffering might be inflicted. The violence of this torture extorted no confession from the murderer, who merely observed that the King had recommended that no harm should be done to him. An odour of burnt flesh filled the room when the Duke d'Ayen came in; and when he saw what was going on, he bitterly upbraided M. de Machault and his companions for dishonouring their swords in such a manner. But M. de Machault was not deterred from his purpose; he had Damiens' legs exposed to a fire until they were but one sore; and as he still was silent, he threatened to throw him into the flames. Fortunately the lieutenant of police arrived, claimed Damiens as his prisoner, and took him away to the Conciergerie, where he was incarcerated in the cell once tenanted by Ravaillac, Henry IV.'s murderer.

Damiens' attempt was already known in Paris, and the old affection shown for the King was rekindling. The Archbishop of Paris ordered that prayers for his recovery should be said during forty-eight hours, and the

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churches became too small for the congregations. Couriers from Versailles were anxiously waited for and questioned; and all the provincial parliaments sent addresses of loyalty to Louis. This effervescence, however, was of short duration; the King's wound was soon healed, and a few days after the momentous occurrence France hardly remembered that for a few hours the King had again been 'the beloved.'

As to Damiens, he was so hurt that he could not move. But he showed no signs of weakness. When questioned, he continued his incoherent statements, and showed that he was more of a religious fanatic than anything else. Suspecting his impending fate, he gave it to be understood that his accomplices belonged to the highest rank; but a subsequent investigation showed the untruth of his assertions. While preparations were being made for his trial he was watched as if the fate of France depended on his escape. Damiens was continually strapped down on a leather mattress, his right hand only being left free. Twelve sergeants picked from the French guards watched him day and night, and a cook of the Court was exclusively entrusted with his food, of which he never allowed him to partake before tasting it, for fear Damiens should be poisoned. One cannot but wonder at these extraordinary precautions against a man whose proper place was in a madhouse.

He recovered sufficiently to appear on March 17 before the Chambre de la Tournelle. He persisted in his previous statements, except in so far as they concerned his accomplices. He pretended that he only

wished to give a wholesome warning to the King, and denied that his crime was instigated by others. This did not satisfy his judges; every stratagem was resorted to to get at Damiens' secret; and, contrary to habit, a confessor was sent to him in the course of the trial, in the hope that a priest might obtain what judges could not elicit. But all such steps were of no avail.

On March 26 the Parliament was in full array; and the presence of the princes of the blood and of the chief members of the aristocracy showed that the last day of the trial was at hand. The procureur-général had drawn conclusions which were lying sealed before the president, M. Pasquier. After a few more questions Damiens was again adjured to name his accomplices. The conclusions of the procureur were then opened and read; they proposed that Damiens should suffer the punishment awarded to regicides, and be tortured before execution. At seven o'clock the Court came to the following decision, which I must quote for my readers to believe in its atrocious barbarity:

'The Court declares Robert François Damiens duly convicted of the crime of *lèse-majesté*, divine and human, for the very wicked, very abominable, and very detestable parricide perpetrated on the King's person; and therefore condemns the said Damiens to *amende honorable* before the principal church of Paris, whither he shall be taken in a cart, wearing only a shirt and holding a taper of the weight of two pounds; and then, on his knees, he shall say and declare that, wickedly and with premeditation, he has perpetrated the said

very wicked, very abominable, and very detestable parricide, and wounded the King with a knife in the right side, for which he repents and begs pardon of God, the King, and Justice; and further the Court orders that he then be taken to the Grève and, on a scaffold erected for the purpose, that his chest, arms, thighs, and calves be burnt with pincers; his right hand, holding the knife with which he committed the said parricide, burnt in sulphur; that boiling oil, melted lead, and rosin, and wax mixed with sulphur, be poured in his wounds; and after that his body be pulled and dismembered by four horses, and the members and body consumed in fire, and the ashes scattered to the winds. The Court orders that his property be confiscated to the King's profit; that before the said execution, Damiens be subjected to *question ordinaire et extraordinaire*, to make him confess the names of his accomplices. Orders that the house in which he was born be demolished, and that no other building be erected on the spot.

'Decreed by Parliament on March 26, 1757.

'RICHARD.'

This sentence, which so minutely describes the details of the punishment, cannot but inspire irresistible horror. Formal deliberations took place at the house of the procureur-général regarding the choice of preliminary tortures; the contagion of cruelty extended to the public, and private individuals made suggestions on the subject. One proposed that matches should be inserted under Damiens' nails, and then

lighted; another that his teeth should be pulled out; another that he should be partly flayed and a burning liquid poured over his muscles. The surgeons of the Court examined these proposals, and decided, that torture by the 'boot' was preferable to other means.

If I give these sickening details, it is because Damiens' execution was almost unique in its atrocious cruelty. Singularly enough, this, the most horrible of inflictions ever recorded, occurred but a few years before the abolition of torture.

CHAPTER XI.

EXECUTION OF DAMIENS.

The authors of the apocryphal memoirs published by Sautelet[1] found no better means of endowing their compilation with the appearance of authenticity than to allege that these memoirs were written by my grandfather. They represent him as being present during Damiens' execution, of which the details were said to be furnished by him, and Charles Jean-Baptiste Sanson, who was then executioner. Charles Henri relates how his father became almost mad with grief, when he heard that he had to dismember; how he went to Melun to purchase the four horses required for the occasion; the whole being spiced with details not a whit more accurate. The chapter in question is completed by the narrative of a visit which the keeper of the seals, escorted by four seigneurs, one of whom was the Duke de Richelieu, paid to the executioner with the object of replacing the horses he had bought for the dismemberment by weaker animals, so as to prolong the sufferings of the culprit.

[1] Fictitious memoirs of Charles Henri Sanson, executioner during the Revolution, were published in 1832. Balzac was one of the authors of this work, which was one of pure invention.

Not only did nothing of the kind take place, M. de Machault usually transmitting his orders to my ancestor through the procureur-général, or requesting him to call at his residence, but Charles Jean-Baptiste Sanson could take no part in the execution of Damiens, as, in the month of January 1754, he became paralysed, and also because this execution was not within his province, but that of Nicolas Gabriel Sanson, his younger brother, executioner of the Prévoté de l'Hôtel.

This office was little more than a sinecure; crimes tried by the Prévoté had not been met with capital punishment for fifty years. When Gabriel Sanson received an order to prepare, not only for the execution of Damiens, but also for his torture, he was filled with apprehension. He spoke to M. Leclerc de Brillet, lieutenant of the Prévoté, who gave him a letter for the procureur-général, in which he urged the latter, in the interest of all parties, to entrust the forthcoming execution to other hands. But, as I said, Charles Jean-Baptiste Sanson was paralysed. His son, Charles Henri Sanson, who was to take his place, was only seventeen years of age. He had discharged his father's functions for the last two years; but the official title of executioner did not belong to him, and it was hardly advisable to entrust so young a man with an execution which was only known by tradition. The procureur was therefore unable to grant the request, but he ordered that Charles Henri, the provisional executioner, and his assistants should be at Gabriel Sanson's disposition.

It was Charles Henri who bought the four horses;

he paid for them 432 livres, a large sum for the time. These horses were placed in a stable of the Rue des Vieilles Garnisons, behind the Hôtel-de-Ville. At the request of M. Leclerc de Brillet, the archives were searched, and papers on the manner of carrying out the execution were found and handed to the executioner of Prévoté de l'Hôtel, whose terror was in no wise diminished by the communication. Indeed, his feelings became so strong that he fell ill. The procureur summoned him to his presence, and upbraided him for what he styled his childishness. The magistrate's threats did not affect him much, for he was speaking of giving up his office, which was his only source of income, when an old questionnaire whose father had taken part in the execution of Ravaillac, and had given some information regarding the punishment of regicides, offered to undertake the burning with pincers.

The scaffold was erected in the night of the 27th. On Monday, the 28th, at six o'clock in the morning, Gabriel Sanson, his nephew Charles Henri, and their assistants went to the Grève to see if all their directions had been attended to. The scaffold was erected in the centre of a space of a hundred square feet, which was surrounded by thick wooden palings. This enclosed space had only two entrances; one for the culprit, the executioners, and the guards, the other communicating with the Hotel-de-Ville.

They then repaired to the Conciergerie, where they found the questionnaire, who was waiting for them. Soon afterwards they were joined by M. Lebreton, the

clerk of the court, accompanied by MM. Carmontel and Peuvret, the ushers. They then prepared to go to Damiens' cell, but on the staircase the clerk bethought himself that it was too small to contain the whole party, and it was decided that the prisoner should be sent for, and sentence read to him in a hall on the ground floor.

Damiens was brought forth: he was carried in a leather bag which was closed over his shoulders, and only allowed his head to appear. He was extracted from this kind of strait-jacket, and told to kneel. Damiens listened to his sentence with extreme attention; and he examined those who were present with much curiosity, trying no doubt to recognise the executioner. His face was as yellow as wax. He could scarcely bear the glare of daylight; but nevertheless his eyes flashed with unwonted energy. When the clerk had done, Damiens asked the archers who had carried him in to help him to rise, for his wounds were not yet healed, and he murmured several times, 'Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!'

Gabriel Sanson now approached and placed his hands on his shoulder. Damiens started and looked scared; but at this moment the Curé de St. Paul approached, and the countenance of the regicide became again calm and smiling. The priest motioned to the others to draw back, and remained alone with Damiens. He spoke to him in a low voice, and Damiens prayed with much fervour. The priest's exhortation seemed to impress him deeply. When their prayers were finished, Damiens was offered food, but he refused to take anything but a

glass of wine, which, however, he was unable to drink. He was affected by a kind of paroxysm which, during the first part of my professional career, I had many occasions to remark in the most courageous and stoical convicts, a violent contraction of the muscles of the neck which prevents the culprit from swallowing.

Damiens was then removed to the torture-chamber where Presidents Maupeou and Molé, and Councillors Severt, Pasquier, Rollin, and Lambelin were already assembled. He was again interrogated. But no question could elicit any information concerning accomplices; and at length the judges rose and told Damiens that he must be tortured, since he would not speak out. The executioners came forward, and the questionnaire of Parliament enclosed the prisoner's leg in the 'boot,' pulling the cords more tightly than he usually did. The pain must have been insufferable, for Damiens shrieked; his face became livid, he threw back his head and nearly fainted away. The surgeons approached, felt his pulse, and declared that the fit was not serious. Damiens opened his eyes and asked for drink; a glass of water was offered to him, but he begged for wine, saying in a broken voice that his energy was failing him. Charles Henri Sanson helped him to carry the glass to his lips. When he had drunk he heaved a deep sigh, closed his eyes, and murmured a prayer. The executioners once again surrounded him: two judges had left their seats and were walking in the hall. President Molé was very pale, and a pen which he held was trembling. Torture was begun again, and for two

hours and a quarter the unfortunate Damiens endured the most excruciating sufferings. At the eighth brodequin the surgeons said the sufferer could stand no more, and the judges rose to depart with an alacrity which proved that perhaps they could not see any more either. The boot was taken off. Damiens tried ineffectually to raise his legs, and then, bending forward, he looked at his broken limbs with an air of grief. Meanwhile the procès-verbal was finished, and Damiens had to sign it. The regicide was then taken to the chapel of the Conciergerie, where he remained with the Curé de St. Paul and another priest.

Profound consternation was depicted on every face, and yet Damiens had only endured a small part of the sufferings which were in store for him. Charles Henri Sanson and two assistants remained with the prisoner, to take him to the Place de Grève, while Gabriel Sanson repaired to the scaffold to see if all was ready. The torturer who had undertaken the burning with pincers, and who curiously enough bore the name of one of the great seigneurs of the time, Soubise, had promised to procure all the necessaries indicated in the sentence. On nearing the scaffold Gabriel Sanson immediately perceived that Soubise was drunk and incapable of discharging his duties. Seized with apprehension, he asked to see the lead, sulphur, wax, and rosin which the old drunkard had undertaken to purchase; the man had procured nothing, and at the moment when the prisoner was expected to arrive, Gabriel discovered that the wood of the pile was damp, and could scarcely be set alight.

Gabriel Sanson lost his presence of mind; and for a time the scaffold was a scene of indescribable confusion; the assistants ran to and fro, all spoke at the same time, and the unfortunate executioner of the Prévoté de l'Hôtel tore his hair, deploring the terrible responsibility he had assumed.

The criminal lieutenant came up, and put an end to the scene. He severely reprimanded Gabriel Sanson, and told him he would send him to prison for a fortnight for neglecting his duties; he then ordered him to return to the chapel and send Charles Henri Sanson to the Grève in his stead. The assistants were sent to the neighbouring grocers to purchase what was missing; but the crowd followed them, they were recognised in all the shops they applied to, and the tradesmen refused to sell the articles they asked for, or said they had not got them. If coercion had not been resorted to, nothing could have been procured.

The difficulties were so great that preparations were not completed when the culprit arrived, and he had to sit on the steps of the scaffold while the last arrangements for his death were being made before him. He had recovered his firmness, and looked calmly about him. He asked to be taken to the Hotel-de-Ville; he begged the magistrates to protect his wife and daughter who were ignorant of his intention to murder the King, and swore that he had no accomplices. He was then taken back to the scaffold.

The chafing-dish on which the sulphur was being burnt with the hot coals filled the atmosphere with

acrid vapour. Damiens coughed, and, while the assistants were making him fast to the platform, he looked at his right hand with the same expression of sadness which had appeared on his face when looking at his legs after torture. His arm was tied to an iron bar so that the wrist should over-reach the last board of the platform. Gabriel Sanson brought the chafing-dish. When the blue flame touched Damiens' skin he uttered a frightful shriek, and tried to break his bonds. But when the first pang had shot through him he raised his head and looked at his burning hand without manifesting his feelings otherwise than by grinding his teeth. This first part of the execution lasted three minutes.

Charles Henri Sanson saw the chafing-dish trembling in his uncle's hands. By his pallor, which was almost as deathly as the sufferer's, and the shudder which made his limbs shake, he perceived that he could not proceed with the burning with red-hot pincers; and he offered a hundred livres to one of the valets if he would undertake the horrible task. The man, whose name was André Legris, accepted. The remainder of the execution was proceeded with; every clause of the atrocious sentence was literally carried out, and, when the four horses had dismembered the body, the remains of Damiens were thrown on the pile.

It was discovered that the victim's hair, which was brown when he was brought to the Grève, had turned as white as snow.[1]

[1] The translator has thought fit to suppress some of the really too horrible details of this execution; and if he has preserved its main features,

The execution of Damiens produced so fearful an impression on Gabriel Sanson, that he was induced to throw up the office of executioner of the Prévoté de l'Hôtel. He gave it to his nephew in return for a yearly stipend of two thousand four hundred livres. Charles Sanson henceforth discharged two functions which had hitherto been separate.

it is because he thought he had no right to divest this historical occurrence of that which might fully impress the reader with its atrocious cruelty, without entering into too sickening details.—N. ED.

CHAPTER XII.

LALLY-TOLLENDAL.

ON May 6, 1766, the Parliament assembled in Court of Justice condemned Thomas Arthur de Lally-Tollendal, lieutenant-general, and commander of the French forces in East India, to capital punishment, *for betraying the interests of the King.*

Iniquitous as this sentence was, it should be said that it was partially supported by public opinion, which, however, was so warm at a later period in asking for Count de Lally-Tollendal's rehabilitation. Our mishaps in India and the loss of our colonies had exasperated the national pride which the French are sufficiently disposed to exaggerate. Thomas Arthur de Lally-Tollendal was of Irish extraction. His family had followed the exiled Stuarts. He became a soldier when he was only a child. At twelve years of age he held a commission in Dillon's Irish regiment, and he took part in the siege of Barcelona. He promptly obtained the command of a regiment, which took his name in 1740; and at the age of thirty-seven he was appointed lieutenant-general.

He devised a plan for landing 10,000 men on the

English coast, to support the rights of the Pretender. This idea, which was as bold as it was impracticable, could not be carried out, although Count de Lally devoted a large part of his fortune to its execution. His dislike for the English and his extreme bravery induced the Government to entrust to him the chief command of the colonial troops; but the violence of his temper, his obstinacy, and especially his contempt for all means of action except brutal strength, were destined to lead him into mistakes in a position demanding more knowledge of politics than science of war. Sixteen years before Lally-Tollendal's appointment, Dupleix, with scanty forces, at enmity with the Company, receiving neither help nor subsidies from the mother country, had held in check English power in the Indian peninsula by mere diplomatic proficiency. Lally knew how to conquer; but he was incapable of studying and detecting the secrets of Dupleix's policy. He began by taking St. David by storm; he also captured Goudelour, and swept the Coromandel coast. At St. David he permitted frightful excesses. His ill-paid troops rushed into the town and ransacked it. At the same time Lally, in his contempt for the Hindoo religion, violated the most revered sanctuaries, and caused natives suspected of being spies to be blown from cannon. The Hindoos who had remained with the French now left them. Deprived of their co-operation, and against the advice of his generals, he marched forward. The English retreated before him; but when he was in the heart of the country they attacked him, and Lally,

at length aware of his mistake, but too late to repair it, retraced his steps, harassed in a retreat which cost him a quarter of his army. Such a defeat, however, would not discourage a man like Lally. He attacked and captured Arcate, and besieged Madras, which soon fell into his hands. His soldiers repeated, or rather transcended, the horrors of the pillage of St. David. But 4,000 Englishmen had taken refuge in the white tower called Fort St. George, where they defeated all attacks. At the same time the Dekhan army, the command of which Lally had taken from Bussi, one of Dupleix's lieutenants, to entrust it to the Marquis de Conflans, was beaten and captured at Masulapatam.

To relate the sequel of Lally's career in India would be an infringement of history. The end of his resistance is well known; from disaster to disaster, Lally came to be surrounded and besieged in Pondicherry, which, however, he defended with extraordinary bravery. At length he was compelled to assemble a council of war to discuss the conditions of his capitulation. General Coote refused to accept anything except an unconditional surrender; and Lally-Tollendal, together with the greater part of his soldiers, were sent to England as prisoners.

The news of this disaster excited general indignation in France. Lally-Tollendal's numerous enemies threw the brunt of the misfortunes of the French arms on his shoulders. Not only were his military talents and his courage impeached, but it was said that he had wasted the public resources, and kept the money sent to him

to pay his soldiers. Lally was in London and had nothing to fear; but on hearing of the rumours that were current, he forgot the dangers that might threaten his life. He solicited of the English Government leave to return to France on parole, and arrived in Paris not as a culprit, but rather as a prosecutor, threatening his enemies with prompt revenge.

However great public anger might be at the time against the man to whom was attributed the disgrace of the French armies, the Government did not care to have Lally arrested. Perhaps the Ministry had no wish to sacrifice the innocent accomplice of the faults for the greater portion of which the Government of Louis XV. was responsible.

Count Lally's enemies, however, were powerful, and an order of arrest was at length issued. The Count's relations and friends urged him to return to England before it was too late; but the fiery general would not hear of a retreat, and implored the King to send him to the Bastille, where he was imprisoned on November 15, 1764.

His captivity was not a severe one, and he doubtless had little idea of the fate which was in store for him; he was allowed to walk about the prison, and to receive his friends while preparations for his trial were being made. The trial lasted more than nineteen months. Far from appeasing the hatred of his enemies, his misfortunes inflamed the ardour with which they called for judgment upon him. On August 3 a petition was sent to the King by M. Legris and the members of the Superior Council

of Pondicherry, who, offended to the highest degree in their honour and reputation by the imputations of M. de Lally, asked for a judicial sanction of his or their conduct. Moreover, the Superior of the Jesuits of Pondicherry, Father Lavaur, returned to Paris at this time; and he was soliciting a pension for the services he had rendered in India to the French Government when he died. His papers were seized and searched; and, besides a large sum in gold which was found at his residence, a long memoir was discovered in which Count Lally was charged with malversation and treason. Noisy as were the clamours of his enemies, so little reason could be given for a charge of dishonesty that the Jesuit's document was the only basis taken by M. Pasquier, who conducted the procedure of this grave affair.

As for the Count, he was so convinced of his own innocence that he was imprudent enough to impeach the officers who had served under his orders, together with the administrators of the colony. He charged them with such violence that his death and condemnation became indispensable for their justification. Letters-patent of the King deferred Lally's trial to the Grande Chambre des Tournelles. When the accused appeared before his judges, he was no more able to control his temper than when he was in India. He disputed the ground step by step, protesting against the charge, answering, fuming, retorting, stigmatising the cowardice of some, the cupidity of others, and hinting that the only guilty party was the powerless Government, which had neither assisted him in his triumph

nor in his misfortunes. The vehemence of his speech, the eloquent expression of his leonine head, which, even in silence, he raised with pride and defiance, and the manner in which he conducted his own defence, produced a favourable impression on the public, and diminished the hostility of the masses. It became evident that treason only existed in the imagination of Lally's enemies; or why had he voluntarily returned to France and thrown himself between the lion's jaws? The charge of malversation was equally groundless; but to prove Lally's abuse of power, violence against the administrators of the colony and his soldiers, and cruelty to the natives, there were but too many witnesses; and for a prejudiced tribunal this was a sufficient pretext to inflict capital sentence.

This sentence was pronounced on May 6, 1766. Thomas Arthur, Count de Lally-Tollendal, was condemned to be decapitated, as duly convicted of having betrayed the interests of the King, of the State, and of the Company, and of having abused his authority.

Lally's pride inspired him with so high a sense of his own importance that, like Marshal de Biron, he had never admitted the possibility of such a result. Many indications of his impending fate should have apprised him of the danger. One morning the major of the Bastille was taking him to Parliament, and a crowd surrounded the carriage. Lally having tried to look out of the window, this officer told him that he had orders to kill him at the slightest word he should address to

the people. Again, a few days before judgment, and as he always appeared dressed as a general and wearing all his orders, the President directed the major to deprive him of these. The officer intimated his orders to the Count, and begged him not to oblige him to have recourse to violence. Lally answered that he would rather part with his life than with the rewards of his bravery and devotion to the King. A struggle followed; Lally was seized by the soldiers, who had to tear his uniform before they could deprive him of his epaulettes and decorations. After sentence was read out to him, he remained dumbfounded and stupefied. But his silence was short. He burst out with curses, and called his judges executioners and assassins. He recovered his self-possession when taken back to the Bastille; expressed his regret to the officer for what had occurred, and embraced him. He went to bed and slept profoundly for a few hours. At seven o'clock in the evening he was roused and told that M. Pasquier, who had reported on his trial, wished to see him. He rose and told the gaoler to introduce the visitor.

Many petitions had been addressed to the King. M. de Choiseul himself interceded in favour of Lally; but Louis XV. was inflexible. However, it was with soft words and hints of the possibility of a reprieve that M. Pasquier spoke to the prisoner; but he used the word 'crime' in qualifying the acts which the Count deemed worthy of reward, and Lally heard no more. He was seized with a fit of fury greater than any he ever had experienced

before, and, seizing a compass which he used to draw the map of the former scene of his success and reverses, he stabbed himself near the heart. The weapon encountered a rib, and only inflicted a slight wound; the gaolers rushed upon him and wrenched the compass from his hand. But despair gave extraordinary strength to the unfortunate old man; he shook off their grip and made for M. Pasquier. Soldiers had to be called in to prevent mishap.

M. Pasquier was so annoyed by this scene that he forgot what was due to an illustrious victim; he ordered Tollendal to be gagged, and asked that, in consequence of the general's attempt to commit suicide, the hour of execution should be advanced.

On the preceding night Charles Henri Sanson had been told to be ready on the following day, at two o'clock in the afternoon. *Thus the execution of Lally-Tollendal was fixed before sentence was passed.*

Charles Sanson was at home, waiting for definite orders, when a carriage drove up before the door; and from it alighted his father, who some years before had retired to the little town of Brie-Comte Robert. Jean-Baptiste Sanson was deeply agitated; he had heard of the result of Lally's trial, and the Count's name had stirred in his mind some curious recollections.

Five-and-thirty years before, a few young men, who had spent the evening in one of the houses of the suburbs of Paris which was afterwards to be called the Faubourg Poissonnière, lost their way, and splashed through the mud, completely at a loss as to the direction they should

take. At length they perceived at the end of a street a row of brilliantly lighted windows on the façade of a large house. They heard a faint murmur of instruments which issued from the premises, and having peeped through the garden gate they saw the figures of dancers whirling past the windows. The young men were somehat elated with wine, and they resolved to join in the fun if they could. They boldly knocked at the door, and gave their names to the servant, requesting the honour of admittance to the ball. The master immediately appeared. He was a man of about thirty, with a gay face and a somewhat distinguished appearance; and the elegance of his dress pointed to a higher social station than the young men had supposed when they plied his knocker. He greeted them with courtesy, and heard their request with the smile of a man who understood the frolic of youth. He told them that the ball was given on the occasion of his marriage, added that it would doubtless be for him a great honour to receive his visitors in his ball-room, but that the society they wished to join was not, perhaps, worthy of them.

The young men, however, insisted; and the bridegroom, having conducted them to the ball-room, introduced them to his young wife and to his family.

At the expense of this family the young noblemen no doubt intended to laugh; but, with the exception of the bridegroom, all the good people retained, in the midst of their pleasures, a dark and severe aspect which damped the gaiety they had anticipated. They looked

with surprise at these curious guests, whose faces remained rather grim and sinister even when they had to express the good-will they felt for the strangers. Some of the women, however, were pretty; the noblemen were in high spirits, and too young and light-hearted to give attention to the circumstance. They danced all night, and seemed delighted at the whole proceedings.

At daybreak, and as they were about to retire, the master of the house asked them whether they wished to know the name and quality of the host of whose hospitality they had kindly consented to partake. The young men rather sarcastically acquiesced, expressing their thanks for the pleasant time they had spent. The young bridegroom, still smiling, then told them that his name was Jean-Baptiste Sanson, that he was the executioner, and that most of the gentlemen whose pleasures they had shared exercised the same profession.

This piece of information very visibly disturbed two of the young men; but the third one, who wore the uniform of Dillon's Irish regiment, and who was remarkable for the manly beauty of his features, burst out laughing, and said that he had long wished to make the acquaintance of the functionary who decapitated, broke, and burned so many good people, and he was very glad of the opportunity. He then begged Sanson to have the kindness to show them his instruments.

Jean-Baptiste hastened to comply with the wish, and took the party to a room which was the arsenal of his tools of torture and death. While the officer's companions were expressing astonishment at

the curious shape of certain instruments he examined the swords of justice with much attention. Jean-Baptiste Sanson took one down and handed it to the young man. This sword was the same which Charles Sanson had shown to the Marquis de Créqy, at the time of Count de Horn's trial. The officer looked at it carefully, and taking it with both hands he wielded it with uncommon strength and dexterity, asking his host whether it was possible to strike off a head with it at a single blow. Jean-Baptiste answered in the affirmative, and added jocosely that if ever the fate of MM. de Boutteville, de Cinq Mars, or de Rohan gave him the opportunity, he could pledge his word that he would not make him suffer.

The young officer, whose curiosity might almost be termed a presentiment, was Count de Lally-Tollendal.

Jean-Baptiste Sanson never forgot the adventure; and, being struck by the strange concourse of circumstances which now seemed to urge him to the discharge of his promise, he resolved to honour his engagement.

Charles Henri Sanson could hardly refrain from smiling when he heard his father speak. The muscles of his right side, which had been paralysed, were now strong again; but he was, on the whole, weak and old. His hair was as white as snow, and although he was only sixty he appeared much older than he really was. It was not without trouble that Charles Henri induced him to give up his intention; and he only did so on the understanding that his son in person should wield the

sword, and that he himself should superintend the execution.

While they were conversing, a police officer came to announce to Charles Henri that the hour appointed for the execution had been advanced, and that he was impatiently expected at the Bastille. Jean-Baptiste chose among the swords that which, five-and-thirty years before, M. de Lally had held; and father and son repaired in great haste to the State prison. The vestibule which led to the prisoner's cell was filled with soldiers and policemen. When Lally heard of the change of hour, he exclaimed that he cared not, and that, although he had been gagged in prison, they could not prevent him from addressing the people while being led to execution. Thick as were the walls of the Bastille, the sighs and cries of the prisoners sometimes traversed them and excited popular sympathy. The unworthy manner in which Lally was treated had become known, and, on the whole, public opinion was favourable to him. Anger had made place for pity; the fate of the unfortunate and illustrious old man was out of proportion to his mistakes. The authorities feared that his violent and impassioned address might induce the people to rescue him, and it was ordered that he should remain gagged while being led to death. The officers of justice did not wait for the executioner to pinion Lally, who resisted with extreme energy; and an iron gag was thrust into his mouth.

These new violences had just taken place when the two Sansons arrived. Jean-Baptiste was much moved.

The cell bore the traces of the struggles which had just taken place there. The table was upset, the papers flying about the cell, the chairs broken. Lally himself was stretched on the bed, bruised and his clothes torn to tatters. Blood was flowing from two deep gashes on his face. A groan, which was more like a threatening cry than an expression of pain, issued from his throat, in spite of the gag, and from time to time he shook his long white hair as a lion shakes his mane. All the persons present were still under the impression of the fray; some were trembling and affected, others were irritated. When the magistrate who had ordered Lally to be gagged saw Charles Henri Sanson, he turned to him, exclaiming, in a loud and rough voice:

'And now this is your business!'

The prisoner heard him, and he scanned the executioner. He also, most probably, remembered the night he had spent in the Rue d'Enfer.

Charles Henri was about to order his assistants to take up the prisoner and carry him down when his father stepped forward, saying that he alone had a right to command. He knelt down before Lally, and, perceiving that the cords were so tight that they almost entered the flesh, he ordered the assistants to slacken them. Lally's eyes then turned to the old executioner. He recognised him, for a smile came to his face, and a tear to his eye. When, after traversing the immense crowd which filled the streets, the executioner's cart reached the Place de Grève, the prisoner had to stop for a moment to hear his sentence read to him. When the

clerk of the Court came to the words, '*for betraying the interests of the King*,' Lally pushed him away, and would hear no more. One could see in his face how much he suffered at being prevented from protesting against the charges brought against him. Supported by Jean-Baptiste, he ascended the scaffold with a firm and light step. When he reached the platform he cast a proud look at the crowd below—a look, my grandfather told us, which was more eloquent than anything he could have said. He then turned to the old executioner. Jean-Baptiste Sanson showed him his withered arm, and pointing to his son who was standing at the other end of the scaffold so as to conceal the sight of the sword from the unfortunate Lally, he said that he was too old to strike, and that his promise must be discharged by a stronger arm and steadier hand than his.

Lally thanked him by an inclination of the head. Charles Henri Sanson now approached, and he was about to raise his sword when old Jean-Baptiste stopped him. With a firm hand, he took the gag out of the Count's mouth, and bowing respectfully: 'Monsieur le Comte,' he said, 'I am the master here. As it happened thirty-five years ago, you are my guest. Accept the supreme hospitality which I then promised you. You can speak if you like.'

'I have spoken enough to men,' answered Lally; 'I have now to speak with God.' And he begun in a loud voice a prayer which I faithfully transcribe, such as my grandfather wrote it out from memory after the execution:

'Oh Lord, You see that I am innocent of the crimes ascribed to me; but I sinned against You when I attempted to destroy myself, and for this I am justly punished. I receive from the hands of this man, placed in my way by Your unfathomable Providence, the death that I wished to inflict upon myself. I bless You, in Your justice, for You will avenge my memory and punish the real traitors.'

After pronouncing these words in a very distinct voice, Lally asked Charles Henri Sanson to come forward.

'Young man,' he said, 'free me of these bonds.'

'Monsieur le Comte, your hands must remain bound behind your back.'

'Is it, then, necessary to tie my hands in order to cut off my head? I have seen death often enough as near as now, and do they think I am going to resist?'

'Monsieur le Comte, it is the custom.'

'Then help me to take off this vest and give it to your father.'

Charles Henri obeyed, and took off the vest, which was made of a valuable golden tissue of India. Each button was a large ruby of the finest water. After this, the Count laid his head on the block, and said, with nervous animation:

'And now, you can strike!'

Charles Henri raised his weapon, and let it fall on the old man's neck. But the hair, which had not been cut, but only raised, obstructed the blade, and the head did not fall.

The blow was so violent that Lally was struck down to the earth. But he sprang to his feet in a moment, and he glared at Jean-Baptiste Sanson with a lamentable expression of indignation and reproach.

At this sight, the old executioner rushed towards his son, and, suddenly recovering his former strength, he took the bloody sword from his hands, and before the cry of horror which rose from the crowd subsided, Lally's head was rolling on the scaffold.

The old nobleman's last prayer was partly granted. The trial of the Count de Lally-Tollendal was revised and his memory was solemnly rehabilitated.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CHEVALIER DE LA BARRE.

AFTER rusting for seven-and-thirty years, the political scaffold had just been erected again for Lally-Tollendal; and the sword of justice had scarcely been restored to the scabbard, when it had again to be drawn against another nobleman, as interesting for youth and courage as for the disproportion between the offence and the punishment.

Towards the end of June 1766, Charles Henri Sanson received an order to start immediately for Abbeville to carry out a capital sentence. The despatch, and the pressing terms in which it was couched, surprised him very much.

A few days before, the Parliament had rejected the appeal of the young Chevalier de la Barre, sentenced by the Presidial of Abbeville to be burnt after being decapitated, for singing obscene songs concerning the Virgin and the Saints. The culprit was not twenty; the most distinguished barristers of Paris declared that the proceedings which had preceded the sentence were monstrous; and it was openly said that the Parliament had confirmed the judgment in order to give satisfaction to

the clergy, whom the edict of proscription against the Jesuits had alarmed. No one thought that the sentence could be executed, and it was generally believed that the King would use his privilege of reprieve.

Nevertheless, the injunctions received by my grandfather were so formal, that he lost no time in setting out for Abbeville. As soon as he arrived in that town, the cradle of his family, he put himself at the disposal of the criminal lieutenant. Fearing that his profession might excite the repugnance of some of the persons who lived in the house of this magistrate, Charles-Henri Sanson gave his name to the servant, saying that he would wait in the courtyard for an answer. He was not a little surprised when he saw the magistrate appear in person, and, instead of the polite but cold greeting he was accustomed to receive, welcoming him with demonstrations of great satisfaction. He was a tall and lanky man; a low forehead, a hooked nose, and greenish eyes concealed under bushy eyebrows gave him a not very prepossessing appearance in spite of the jubilation depicted on his countenance.

My grandfather bowed low; but, before he could explain the purpose of his visit, the criminal lieutenant told him that he knew he came about the Chevalier de la Barre; that the King had turned a deaf ear to all petitions for the young man's life; that the execution was to take place on the following day; and with the most objectionable familiarity he furnished Charles Henri with all the details of the trial and of the crime, laying stress on the justice of the former and the enormity of the

latter, sneering at the extreme indulgence of the Parliament, which had mitigated some clauses of the sentence, and repeating several times: 'It is a great culprit, a very great culprit, you have to punish, sir; and you should be proud and happy to have to avenge the King of kings, so grievously outraged by this ruffian.'

Accustomed as he was to the dignity of Parisian magistrates, Charles Henri Sanson could hardly credit his senses. After the criminal lieutenant of Abbeville had given him his instructions, he went to the house which had been assigned to him as an abode, thinking on the way that he was again about to serve as the instrument of an iniquity.

The facts which had brought about the conviction of the Chevalier de la Barre were these: In 1747 a kind of calvary in the Italian style had been erected on the new bridge of Abbeville; it was adorned with an image of Jesus Christ. On the morning of August 7, 1765, it was remarked that the cross had been mutilated during the night. One of the arms of the image was broken, the crown of thorns torn off, and the face of the statue was besmeared with mud.

This took place at a time of religious effervescence; the trial of Lavalette, the edict of eviction against the Jesuits, the attacks of philosophers, and parliamentary agitation had led astray the most sincere Catholics who thought their religious independence was threatened. The sacrilegious offence which had been committed in their town produced deep commotion among the inhabit-

ants of Abbeville. An expiatory ceremony conducted by the Bishop of Amiens increased this effervescence. The prelate went to the calvary at the head of a procession, walked around it with a rope round his neck and barefooted, excommunicated the culprits, and called down upon them death and execration.

The criminal lieutenant immediately began proceedings. Over one hundred witnesses were heard: none could furnish any reliable information; but they were lavish in the vague insinuations that are familiar to inhabitants of small towns. The airy sallies of a few young men assumed the proportions of premeditated crimes against religion, and led to the inference that the mutilation of the holy statue was the symptom of a conspiracy of the infidels of Abbeville against the Catholic religion.

M. Duval de Soicourt, the criminal lieutenant whom we have seen greeting my grandfather in so strange a manner, showed extreme passion in the course of this affair; and this led, not without some show of reason, the people to believe that under the cloak of religion he was avenging his personal animosities. There resided in Abbeville a pious and charitable lady who was disliked by M. Duval de Soicourt. Mdme. Feydenu de Brou—such was her name—was abbess of Villancour, and had in her convent a girl whose guardian was the criminal lieutenant. The orphan was rich, and her guardian had always nourished a hope that her fortune might come into his family by the marriage of the girl with his son. But when she was of age she expressed

the greatest repugnance to the proposed union; the abbess supported her in her resistance, and she obtained a decision of the Presidial, by which M. Duval de Soicourt was deprived of his guardianship. Stung to the quick, and supposing that Mdme. de Villancour wished to bespeak the rich alliance for the Chevalier de la Barre, a cousin of hers who lived with her, the criminal lieutenant swore that he would have his revenge.

A few days after the sacrilege he found an opportunity of giving vent to his hatred. The Chevalier de la Barre and one of his friends named D'Etalonde de Morival, when sauntering about town, met a procession of monks, and did not take off their hats as it passed—an irreverence which was considerably extenuated by the fact that it was raining. This was enough for M. Duval de Soicourt; he connected the two affairs—the adventure of the procession and of the sacrilege, and also the blasphemous statements of which he had heard. He therefore accused five young men belonging to the most important families of the province. Three of these, D'Etalonde de Morival, Dumaniel de Savense, and Douville de Maillefer, escaped; the two others, De la Barre and Moisnel, were arrested.

The trial was soon concluded. Moisnel, who was only fourteen, was acquitted; but, in spite of Mdme. de Villancour's efforts, the Chevalier de la Barre and D'Etalonde de Morival, the latter *in contumaciam*, were sentenced, on February 28, 1766, to the cruel punishment before mentioned.

I have also related how Parliament rejected La

Barre's appeal. He was taken back to Abbeville, where the execution was to take place.

Charles Henri Sanson was still asleep, on the morning after his arrival, when a loud knock was heard at the street door of the house; it was a turnkey, who brought an order of the criminal lieutenant for him to attend immediately at the Hôtel-de-Ville, whither the doomed young man had been transferred. On the way, the turnkey informed my grandfather that since La Barre had heard that the executioner of Paris had been summoned to Abbeville, he was very anxious to see him. He added that the criminal lieutenant, to whom the prisoner's desire was communicated, had answered: 'Tell M. de la Barre that he can have a sufficient look at him to-morrow;' and that he only yielded after the wish had been reiterated.

The Chevalier de la Barre was in a room on the ground floor of the Hôtel-de-Ville. The turnkey informed him that the person he wished to see was at hand; and as Charles Henri Sanson appeared on the threshold, M. de la Barre, who was sitting near the mantelpiece, rose to meet him.

M. de la Barre was barely twenty; his beardless face, delicate and regular features, and rather feminine beauty made him appear still younger than he really was. He was well formed and elegant; and under any other circumstances Charles Henri Sanson could not but have been struck by his noble and distinguished bearing; but he was too surprised at the extraordinary calmness of the young man at this terrible moment

to think of anything else: a slight pallor was the only symptom of emotion to be seen on his face, and a faint redness of the eyelids showed that he had shed a few tears.

He looked smilingly at the executioner, and apologised for disturbing him so early: 'The prospect of the deep sleep which I am to enjoy through you,' he said, 'has made me selfish. You are the man who decapitated Count de Lally-Tollendal, I think?'

This question was put in an easy and simple way which disconcerted my grandfather; and he could hardly find words to reply.

'You made him suffer outrageously,' added the Chevalier. 'I confess that this is the only feature of death that frightens me. I was always something of a coxcomb, and I cannot reconcile myself to the idea that my poor head, which they said was not altogether ugly, should horrify those who see it.'

Charles Henri answered that M. de Lally's violent agitation rather than the executioner's awkwardness was the cause of the accident. He added that decapitation was a gentleman's punishment, because it was necessary that the patient should show fortitude; and further, that the courage of the sufferer was as indispensable to its proper execution as the dexterity of the headsman. He added that the extraordinary coolness M. de la Barre was displaying while discoursing on what was for others a subject of terror, made him feel confident that his head would suffer no mutilation.

'Well,' said La Barre, 'I think I can give you satisfaction, but pray be careful;' after which he dismissed him. As Charles Henri Sanson was retiring, an old lady and a monk entered the room. It was Mdme. de Villancour, who came to bid farewell to the one she loved like a son, and who brought with her a confessor.

My grandfather remained at the Hôtel-de-Ville. At eight o'clock the criminal lieutenant arrived, and Charles Henri was struck by the contrast presented by the calm and serene countenance of the victim, and the agitated features of his judge. M. Duval de Soicourt's face was livid, his lips quivered, his eyes had a feverish look; he smiled continually, but his satisfaction was now less real than on the preceding day. It was not difficult to perceive that his conscience was unquiet. He went to and fro, hurried the preparations for departure, and from time to time he heaved deep sighs which betrayed the discomfort of his mind.

At length the cortége started (July 1, 1766). M. de la Barre had on his chest a placard on which the words 'infidel, blasphemer, abominable and execrable sacrilege' were written in large letters. His confessor, a monk of the order of St. Dominique, was on his right; the criminal lieutenant was on the other side. When the Chevalier saw him, a slight contraction was observed on his handsome face; he told my grandfather to stand on his left, and, Charles Henri having obeyed, he said in a loud voice, looking at M. Duval de Soicourt:

'It is better so; between the doctor of the soul and the doctor of the body, what need I fear?'

He was taken before the porch of Saint Wulfranc, where he was to make amende honorable; but he energetically refused to pronounce the usual words of the formula. 'To confess my guilt,' he cried, 'would be to offend God by a falsehood; I cannot do it.'

When he was on the scaffold, my grandfather noticed that his colour vanished, but he recovered his self-possession in a moment. The monk was quite overpowered. Charles Henri Sanson told his assistants to give him his sword. The Chevalier wished to see it, passed his finger along the edge, and, having made sure that it was of good steel and sharp, he said to the executioner:

'Now, master, strike with a firm hand, for I am not afraid.'

My grandfather looked at the young man, quite surprised.

'But, Monsieur le Chevalier,' he said, 'you must kneel.'

'I cannot; I am no criminal. I refused to make amende honorable. Strike me as I am.'[1]

Charles Henri Sanson knew not what to do. 'Now then, be quick,' added the Chevalier, in a tone of impatience.

Then occurred a fact singular enough to be recorded here. My grandfather handled his sword with so much

[1] M. Charles Louandre, of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, has adduced proofs that the Chevalier de la Barre was quite innocent of an offence which, in any case, it was monstrous to punish with death.—N. Ed.

vigour and dexterity, that it severed the spine and went through the neck without dislodging the head from the shoulders. It was only when the body fell that it rolled on the boards of the scaffold, to the amazement of the witnesses of this extraordinary feat.

This unprecedented incident has been taken up by chroniclers, and all kinds of stories in prose and in verse have been invented thereon. They are all innaccurate. An unscrupulous writer has even asserted that my grandfather, proud of his success, turned to the crowd and said:

'Was it not a fine blow?'

It is my duty, in justice to my grandfather and to our sinister corporation, to contradict these shameless words, which would have soiled even the lips of a headsman. The executioner who exercises his profession because he likes it, and who admires his talents of destruction, is an absurd fiction. If there are, in history, monsters cruel by instinct and sanguinary by system, they are not to be found in our ranks. I have, of course, known many of my confrères; and if most of them were not, to the same degree as myself, victims of their birth and family traditions, I can nevertheless affirm that none discharged functions so antipathetic to the natural sentiments of men without a feeling of shame.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE EXECUTIONER AND THE PARLIAMENT.

THE executions which have been described in the preceding chapters have compelled me to set aside for a while the part of these memoirs which relates to the autobiography of my family, and which, according to my plan, should be presented simultaneously with the documents quoted in the course of the present judicial history. I now return to our private matters.

When I interrupted these domestic records, Charles Sanson had just died, and his widow, Marthe Dubut, had obtained for her eldest son, Charles Jean-Baptiste Sanson, aged seven years, the position of his father. Man becomes used to everything, and of this I myself have been a sad proof; but it is from the time of Charles Jean-Baptiste that my family seems to have quite reconciled itself, and to have accepted a kind of identification with the bloody appanage which it already regarded as hereditary. Jean-Baptiste was a child, and he never knew the gloomy feelings of his grandfather, nor his father's melancholy. Prepared for the calling which he was to adopt, he never aspired to a higher one.

Marthe Dubut had tenderly loved Charles Sanson; in her reverence for his memory she desired that her sons should not be ashamed of their father; and to prevent this she decided that they should follow his profession. Not satisfied with the success of her eldest son, she also solicited and obtained for her second son the office of executioner of the Prévoté-de-l'Hôtel. We have seen by the execution of Damiens how ill-fitted the poor fellow was for such an office. Not so with Charles Jean-Baptiste Sanson. He was like his mother, and almost liked his profession. I said that his extreme youth left a gap in our family annals; there was another reason for this lacuna: at a *competent* age, to use the expression which describes, in his letters of nomination, the time when he could discharge his functions, he continued his father's and grandfather's record at some intervals and with an unwilling hand. It is easy to perceive that, being less impressed than they were by the scenes in which he took the most conspicuous part, he had little to say about them. A few notes constitute the only tribute he thought fit to render to the old custom of his predecessors; and these notes are so vague that it is difficult to use them.

It is only in the month of January 1755, when my grandfather is holding the pen, that I find some interesting information with a few details. He dwells first on the execution of one Ruxton, who was broken for murdering M. Andrieu, a barrister; then that of De Montgeot, an engineer who, after an imprisonment of two years, suffered the same punishment for the

same crime committed on the person of M. Lescombat, an architect. This lamentable affair is well known. Blinded by a fatal affection, De Montgeot murdered Lescombat, and tried to ward off suspicion by calling the patrol to his help, and pretending that he slew his victim in self-defence. This statement met with no credit, and De Montgeot was executed. Exasperated by the heartlessness of his paramour, Mdme. Lescombat, he denounced her as his accomplice. The woman was confronted with him at the foot of the scaffold. She was remarkably handsome, and she tried the effect of her charms on her judges, but without avail. She was sentenced to die, and was hanged on the Place de Grève.

A month afterwards, the execution of one Dufrancey, a magistrate of La Marche, took place. This man charged a merchant named Roy with inciting a number of soldiers of the guard to murder him. He afterwards attempted to withdraw the indictment; but it was too late, and he was called upon to prove his allegations. Dufrancey paid false witnesses to corroborate his charge, and persuaded them that the prisoner was in no danger of capital punishment. When the fourth witness came forward, the unfortunate Roy, appalled by the evidence, exclaimed: 'What have I done to you, that you should bring me to the scaffold? I do not even know you, and I never saw you before!'

The witness, who was a painter, answered: 'What! to the scaffold? I was not aware that the consequences were so serious.' These words excited suspicion. The

man was sharply cross-examined, and the whole truth came out. The three other false witnesses were immediately arrested; their trial was soon concluded, and, after being tortured, they were broken on the wheel with the man who had corrupted them.

These are the only facts I can find in Jean-Baptiste Sanson's notes. In the month of January 1754 he had had an attack of paralysis from which he never completely recovered. We have seen him finding again some strength at the execution of Count de Lally; but he relapsed into his former state of weakness, and bestowed little attention on anything, much less on circumstances relating to his profession.

By his marriage with Madeleine Tronson he had ten children; three daughters and seven sons. All the boys selected their father's profession. One became executioner at Rheims, another at Orleans, another at Meaux, a fourth at Etampes, a fifth at Soissons, and a sixth at Montpellier; and the seventh succeeded to his father. When, on certain occasions, all Jean-Baptiste's children met at the same table, the family gathering wore a patriarchal appearance. The grandmother, Marthe Dubut, who reached a very old age, was seated at one end of the table; and facing her was her son, whose paralysis gave him an appearance not devoid of majesty. It was in these gatherings that the servants, forgetting the Christian names of the sons of Jean-Baptiste, began to designate them by the names of their jurisdictions, and said in turn, Monsieur de Rheims, Monsieur de Soissons, Monsieur d'Orleans, &c., a habit

which was preserved in our profession, although it had no other origin.

The eldest, Charles Henri Sanson, who was called Monsieur de Paris, was undoubtedly morally and physically superior to his brothers. Handsome and well-formed, he possessed a superior intellect moulded by an excellent education. He was extremely elegant, and had drawn upon himself so much attention by the richness of his dress that a somewhat arbitrary measure was taken, which forbade him to wear blue because it was the colour of noblemen. Charles Henri might have shown the papers of the Longval family and raised the question whether the office of executioner was a disgrace. His manner of protesting consisted in wearing still more gorgeous costumes of green cloth. He gave fashion to this colour, and all the beaux of the Court, the brilliant Marquis de Létorières at their head, adopted the cut and colour of his garments and wore coats à la Sanson.

From my grandfather's time commences the most curious and now uninterrupted sequence of these memoirs. But, before giving the notes he left concerning the Revolution, I cannot do better, to introduce him, than quote an adventure of his youth. Of this he left an autograph account, which I textually give:

'After a long day's shooting, I was entering an inn at dinner time, when I found myself in the company of Mdme. le Marquise de X——, who was returning from her country-house to Paris. This lady bowed, offered me a seat, and, after half an hour's conversation, she at

length asked me what my profession was. Of course I replied that I was an officer of Parliament. She immediately requested that our dinners should be served together, and we made such a gay and pleasant repast that on both sides it seemed as if the heart had something to do with our conversation.

'After dessert, I ordered my horses and postchaise, and retired, after profusely thanking the lady for her gracious greeting; but hardly had I left the room when a gentleman who was acquainted with the Marquise came up and asked her:

'"Madame, do you know the young man who has just dined with you?"

'"No," she answered; "he told me he was an officer of Parliament."

'"He is the executioner of Paris; I know him quite well. He has just executed a man; or rather superintended an execution, for he seldom does the work himself."

'At these words the Marquise nearly fainted. She remained speechless with confusion, shed tears, and, remembering that I had touched her hand, she asked for a basin and water and washed her hands. She stepped into her carriage full of anger, and during her journey she thought of the means of avenging herself. Shortly after her arrival in Paris she presented a petition to Parliament in which, after relating what had taken place, she asked that I should be sentenced to beg her pardon, with a rope round my neck, for the insult of which she said I had been guilty; and that,

for the safety of the public, I should henceforth wear a distinctive sign so that all should know me.

'The Court summoned the parties concerned to appear before it. I sought a barrister everywhere to take my case in hand; but either owing to the influence of Mdme. la Marquise, which was great, or because of a reluctance to appear as the advocate of the executioner, no one would undertake to act as my counsel, and I was obliged to conduct my own case.

'The advocate of the plaintiff forgot nothing, and laid stress on the flagrant insult Mdme. la Marquise had to complain of. He described with much eloquence the sad situation of the poor lady, after she had been informed of the profession of the man with whom she had dined. He said that my infamous calling did not allow me to eat even in the company of a mere bourgeois; far less could I do so with a person of Madame's rank; and he concluded by asking that his client's demands should be granted.

'I answered in the following terms:

'"It is fortunate for me, gentlemen, that, being charged before you as a criminal, nothing is alleged against my honesty. Thank Heaven, my conscience is burthened by no misdeed human justice has a right to deal with; my only crime is that I discharge functions that are held to be infamous and disgraceful. Now, I ask you, gentlemen, whether there are infamous and disgraceful functions in the State?

'"Infamy is the appanage of crime, and where there is no crime there cannot be infamy. The discharge of

my functions is not criminal; on the contrary, it is an act of justice; and the same principle of equity which leads you to pass a sentence actuates me when I have to inflict the penalty upon the culprit. The plaintiff did not reflect when she summoned me before you. If I had claimed your equity, she might have complained and suspected you. The fact is that our functions are connected together to such a degree that mine cannot be stigmatised without mortal imputation on yours. I merely act in obedience to your orders, and if there was aught reprehensible in my avocations it would redound to your discredit, since, by the essence of the laws, the one who orders a crime is more guilty than the person who commits it.

"I am quite aware that all public offices are not equally honourable; they are creditable only because they are useful to society; but according to the latter principle mine stands in the first rank. What would the State do if it were suppressed for one single day? The whole kingdom would be a vast field of brigandage; impunity giving encouragement to all passions, the most sacred laws would be trodden under foot, virtue would be despised and vice would prevail. There would be no other law than the law of the strongest; murder, rapine, and theft would be fearlessly committed under the very eyes of Justice. It would be useless to punish and condemn; pecuniary penalties do not frighten penniless brigands; sentences entailing physical penalties would be laughed at if there was no one to carry them out; for I venture to say it, gentlemen, fearless of forgetting

the respect due to you, they do not fear your sentences, nor the pen of the clerk of the Court; it is my sword which makes them tremble; it is in the shadow of that sword that innocence breathes freely, that the police are powerful, and that public order prevails.

'"The God of armies has placed the sword in the hands of the King to punish crime and protect innocence. Being unwilling to wield it himself, he has done me the honour to entrust it to my hands. I am the guardian of this treasure, which is the finest appanage of his royalty and the distinctive emblem of his sovereignty. It is not to you, properly speaking, that he has given it in trust; the culprit deserves punishment because of his crime, not of your sentence; or, to speak more accurately, it is the law which inflicts punishment; you merely declare that he is convicted of a crime, and consequently, in the case of capital punishment, I, as public minister, use the weapon wherewith I have been entrusted. I punish crime and avenge outraged virtue; this gives to my employment a pre-eminence and a degree of elevation which brings it in closer connection with the throne.

'"I know that my office is considered dishonourable because I slay men; hence the feeling of horror with which I am regarded. This is the result of mere prejudice, which must soon be dispelled if the facts are examined without prejudice. There is no disgrace in shedding blood when the weal of the State demands it; it is even an honourable function. Witness the profession of arms which is highly esteemed, although it

has for its object to shed the blood of the enemy. Ask a soldier what his profession is; he will tell you that, like me, he is a slayer of men. Yet his company is never shunned, and no one thinks he is disgraced by eating in his company. For what reason do people despise in my profession functions which are deemed creditable in men of war? If there be any difference between us, surely it is to my advantage; for who does a soldier slay? Innocents, very honourable men whose only crime is that they do their duty! It makes the tears of widows and orphans flow; whereas, in the accomplishment of my avocations, I respect innocence, I only kill culprits; and a man who has done his duty has no reason to fear me. I merely purge society of the monsters who disturb its repose.

'"By this parallel I do not pretend to diminish the esteem that is due to the noble profession of arms. Soldiers watch our frontier, foil the attempts of our enemies, and ensure for us the priceless boon of peace; it is only just to honour a calling which is so useful to society; but I do not fear to say, gentlemen, that, however useful the profession of arms may seem to you, mine is still more indispensable. Soldiers only repress external raids. They have to fight but rarely; lapses of twenty years have passed without the army being called to action; whereas I preserve peace at home; I continually restrain the insolence of the bad citizens who disturb the public peace; and scarcely a week elapses without there being occasion for me to punish crime and avenge the rights of innocence. Thus I am more useful

to the public, and my help is particularly efficacious; for each solitary soldier, each officer, contributes but in a small degree to the happiness of the State; the glory of preserving public tranquillity is divided among so many thousand men, that each individual has only a small share of the privilege. On the other hand, in my profession lies the advantage of alone ensuring public tranquillity, and I can say without exaggeration that I alone in my vast department secure quiet more effectually than a hundred thousand men can do on behalf of the State.

'"Do not believe, gentlemen, that, in defending the unjustly attacked prerogatives of my office, I claim any personal merit; I know that a function, however brilliant, is always distinct from the individual who holds it. The real glory of man lies in virtue and the proper accomplishment of his duties, and I never sought any other. I should not assuredly have attempted to vindicate the duties of my office if the injustice of my enemies had not obliged me to do so. As I lay no claim to the glory of my functions, it would be unjust to cast upon me the opprobrium which the thoughtless have seen fit to attach to them, and to call me infamous because it is alleged that my office deserves the epithet.

'"The advocate of the plaintiff, not finding in the exercise of my office sufficient grounds to describe it as contemptible, has alluded to the unworthiness of those who hold it. Men deserving death, said he, and sentenced to capital punishment, have saved their

lives by undertaking the hateful task which no one else would accomplish. This, it must be admitted, has occasionally happened, and the deplorable blindness of men should be regretted in such circumstances. Several honest men who could have served society with profit in the functions of this important office, blinded by prejudice, gave them up and were compelled to remit them to less worthy hands; but what does this prove? Just as a lofty office confers no degree of merit on a sot who happens to hold it, in the same way the demerit of the holder cannot in any manner affect the office and dishonour it. If I had gained mine by the means he describes, his argument against me would be, I admit, conclusive; but such is not the case. I have the honour to be the fourth of my family to whom it has descended from father to son, and if hereditary nobility were attached to it, as it ought to be, I might stand on even ground with Mdme. la Marquise.

'"You laugh, gentlemen, at the word 'hereditary.' I cannot find anything extraordinary or preposterous in it. Military offices, which have the same functions as mine, and which, as I have observed, are inferior to it, enjoy the same advantage. Yours, gentlemen—allow me to say so, yours—which only contribute to the public weal in an indirect way, while mine has a more direct application, have the same privilege. Why is the concession denied to my office? It will not be denied, I suppose, that I am a member of Parliament, and perhaps, I may say, one of its most useful members. None among you gentlemen, can, individually, ensure

public happiness effectually; none can pronounce a sentence except in conjunction with all the other members of the body. Thus you never act otherwise than as members; whereas I procure peace alone, and I act as a chief. Now every chief is respectable, and to whatever category he may belong he should enjoy the privilege of nobility. The general prosecutor, who is the chief of his department, has it; so does the chief clerk of the Court. Why should I be deprived of it by an unrighteous exception? I will press no further the sovereign reasons suggested by the justice of my case; I merely point them out, as you may see. Men of my profession can act better than they can speak, handle the sword better than make a speech; I believe, nevertheless, that I have said enough to urge confidently that Mdme. la Marquise should be nonsuited. I might urge a plea against her, but I consider the weakness of her case as a sufficient rebuke. I therefore ask, not that the alleged infamy of my office be removed, for no infamy is attached to it, but that it be declared that not only am I a member of the Sovereign Court, but that I am the head of my department; that my office has particular resemblance to the profession of arms; that, in consequence, I have a right to the prerogative of gown and sword; and I further ask that, in virtue of this twofold title, nobility be conferred upon me, as well as upon my posterity; and I am confident that you cannot but grant my petition."

'The advocate for the plaintiff perceived that my speech had impressed the judges, and he hastened to

reply. "I do not know, gentlemen," he said, "whether the speech you have just heard is worthy of your contempt, or whether it should not excite your indignation.

'"What! a wretched executioner presume to compare himself to you, and even dare to claim pre-eminence! He claims the lead of the officers of Parliament. What! although soldiers expose their lives for the safety of the State, their glory does not equal his; and he asks for nobility! In fact, he is the first functionary of the State! I will not stoop to discuss his arguments. It is sufficient to observe that the contempt and hatred that are felt for his office are as old as the world; they are common to all nations and all times. It is an innate sentiment, a cry of the heart, which discards this minister of death; one can never see him without feeling secret horror, and our eyes cannot but seek on his clothes marks of his cruelty; it always seems to us that he is reeking with human blood. Let him say what he likes; no argument can stand against the sentiment he inspires; as long as his profession is to shed blood and destroy men, nature must recoil before him.

'"Think of it, gentlemen; believe the impulse of nature, and I am sure Mdme. la Marquise shall win the day."

'I looked at him with pride and contempt, and answered:

'"I did not think that it required so little to be an advocate. Since it is thus, and if I am contradicted again, I can become a lawyer in three days. What!

you rejoice in the title and you argue so lamely? I beg you to observe, gentlemen, that feeling how impossible it is for him to answer my arguments, he merely attacks my conclusions and tries to turn them into ridicule; he allows the premises, to use a legal expression, and denies the consequence. A curious answer, indeed! He should have attacked my principles and denied the consequences. He does neither the one nor the other; he knows that what I have said is so true that he cannot even doubt it. He is angry with me because I said that my calling is equal to the military profession, and that it is closely linked with your office. I am sorry for him, but this truth is so clearly proved that I defy him, or anyone else, to refute it. He feels that common sense is against him. He appeals to sentiment; a paltry trick, indeed! He says that he feels a loathing for my office; I suppose he does experience such a sentiment since he says so. But, as for me, I assure you that I feel quite differently. He boldly asserts that all men feel like him. How can he say? Innate sentiment is only known to those who feel it. And even if he were right, what of that? It would be a traditional prejudice, a result of education. This horror is just what I complain of. The question is whether this horror is equitable, and this my opponent refuses to argue. The only reason on which he bases the alleged infamy of my profession is that its object is the death of men. I have already observed that it is not disgraceful to shed blood for the welfare of the State. I will only add a few comments which will demonstrate my right, and show

the bad faith and ignorance of the advocate of Mdme. la Marquise, who asserts that at all times my office has been loathed by the public. Is he not aware, then, that among the ancients it was the custom to entrust the functions I discharge to the most meritorious in the State? Solomon, the wisest of all kings, knew what glory was, and when he wished to bestow on some one a token of his friendship, he gave him an office similar to mine. Benaiah, the captain of his guards and his favourite, was invested with this dignity.

'"It is true that there was no Parliament at the time. There was only the sovereign and his executioner for the maintenance of order. These two dignitaries were correlative, and one could not subsist without the other. Solomon alone pronounced judgment, and Benaiah alone could carry it out. Joab had prevaricated; the king sentenced him to death, and Benaiah killed him: '*Interfice eum et sepeli*,' said the king to him. Shimei suffered a like fate. David acted in a similar manner. A young page for whom he felt affection was entrusted by him with the execution of the criminal Amalekite, who had borne a sacrilegious hand on the person of Saul, king of Israel. My opponent knows nothing of history, or is merely trying to deceive the Court. Confess, gentlemen, that if the King had attached a salary of one hundred and fifty thousand livres to my office, together with suitable privileges, it would be the finest office in the State. If you still doubt this, let us attack my adversary's principles. So long as my profession consists in shedding blood and slaying men, my profession must

remain infamous, and nature must recoil from me. Such is his argument. If it is just, all those who make a profession of shedding blood should share my fate. The principle is common to all, and the consequence applies to all in the same way. Thereby he stigmatises all soldiers; he wounds the natural sentiments and tastes of all nations which always regarded them with favour. According to him, a brave officer who retires from battle covered with dust and blood should be regarded as an unnatural monster, deserving of horror and contempt. Who does not feel the absurdity of such reasoning? He is bound to admit it or to discard his principle; to excuse a soldier because he attacks armed men and risks his life is a frivolous exception; his profession is, all the same, bloodshed and killing. Thus the principle can apply to him as well as to me. Six armed soldiers co-operate against a poor deserter, who is pinioned and unable to defend himself; they blow his brains out, and they certainly do not risk their lives in so doing; and yet no one will venture to think them sullied. But what is the use of so many subterfuges. It is certain that it is neither humiliating nor low to shed blood when the safety of the State demands it. It is even an honourable function. My office is the only one which it is intended to except. And if I ask by what right, no other answer can be given except that this state of things springs from fancy and prejudice. Who, among sensible men, would be guided by ideas that are in contradiction to sound reason, which give the name of virtue to vice, and of vice to virtue?

'"A man kills his enemy in a duel; that is, he transgresses all divine and human laws. He deserves the worst punishment; he should become in the eyes of the world an object of horror; no one should eat with him, or even speak to him? Not at all: fancy decrees that he should be regarded as a man of honour, and his crime as an act of valour. How unfortunate is the age we live in! Fancy is supreme; virtue is oppressed, and vice condoned! What! an infamous duellist who has just killed a human creature to satisfy his brutality is to be considered an honest man, while a deserving individual, who serves society in the most important function of the State, is to be regarded as a ruffian who cannot sit down at table with any other person! It is a disgrace to our century. It is your duty, gentlemen, to discard this perverse taste. You cannot do better than grant the prayer I address to you. I ask no favour; but I expect everything of your equity."'

The Court retired to confer, and decided that the case should be indefinitely adjourned. More than a century after this judgment was pronounced, I publish my grandfather's curious brief, in which he attempted a rehabilitation, nay, a glorification which never occurred to me. I abstain from any remark. What are the arguments of logic against that innate feeling which, as the advocate of the Marchioness very well said, must always predominate? Innate feeling honours the soldier, absolves the duellist, and brands the executioner; but how can it condemn him without also discarding capital punishment?

I now return to my family and Charles Henri Sanson. I have yet to relate his first love, which is interesting for more than one reason, inasmuch as the object of his affection was Marie Jeanne Gomart Vaubernier, who was to be the Comtesse du Barry.

CHAPTER XV.

FAMILY ANECDOTES.

I HAVE given a faithful description of Marthe Dubut, widow of Charles Sanson II., who enjoyed a long life and saw her descendants multiply in the profession she contributed to maintain in the family. I have not, however, sufficiently dwelt on the career of Charles Jean-Baptiste Sanson, her son, who was the father of the numerous lineage which we have seen spreading over France in the capacity of executioners. However, I must neglect M. de Rheims, M. de Provins, and the others in favour of Monsieur de Paris, the head of the family, and the most important functionary of his order. The house of the executioner of Paris always held the first rank; it was a kind of metropolis, of which the provincial executioners considered themselves suffragans. We were often sent out into the provinces to superintend executions; advice was regularly asked of us by our subordinates, and a constant correspondence was carried on between Paris and the other chief towns of the country. I may add that some of our confrères of the departments sent us their sons as assistants for a certain time, that they might acquire ability in the profession. We seldom

refused to receive such pupils, and we admitted the novices, who sat at our table as long as they remained with us.

When the number of Charles Jean-Baptiste's children is remembered, one may have an idea of the numerous company which assembled in the dining room of our house. Charles Jean-Baptiste shared his mother's singular ideas and strange principles; both were much respected by their children and the strangers who found hospitality under their roof. The life of Charles Jean-Baptiste was very active and left him but little time for amusement. He studied anatomy with fervency, as Sanson de Longval had done. He possessed the science to a greater degree than any of my ancestors. He always rose early; after a light meal, he went to church at Saint Laurent and returned to his house, where he received a certain number of patients whom he treated according to their ailings. These consultations lasted until dinner time. After dinner the family took a stroll in the garden, and then my great-grandfather returned to his laboratory, where he prepared his medicines or pursued his studies. At dusk, until supper was served, he sat down before his door, and breathed the fresh air. He occasionally encountered the hostile look of some neighbour; but he found ample compensation for such signs of contempt in the bows of a throng of paupers and patients who always found assistance and advice under his roof.

It is difficult to explain the psychological phenomena by which many of us have been enabled to unite with

a profession for which I have always felt repugnance the practice of the highest virtue. I could quote many instances; that, among others, of the executioner Gasnier, of Rennes, who, in his jurisdiction, was the providence of the poor, and who had earned so much consideration that the members of the local Parliament often came to see him, walked with him in his garden, and even asked for his advice. I can mention in favour of my family, if not tokens of esteem and sympathy as flattering, a course of conduct which deserved such gratifying marks. Connection between the magistracy of Paris and the executioner was less direct than in the provinces, and since the Revolution this connection has steadily decreased. It was never given to members of the Parliament and of the Court of Paris to know the moral worth of the family in which was transmitted from father to son an office to which even French legislation persists in ascribing the lowest rank. But the recollections my ancestors have left in the localities in which they dwelt are highly flattering to them. Despite of the reprobation which was attached to their functions, they were escorted to the grave by a numerous cortége of paupers, and I remember that a similar event happened when I took my poor father to his last resting-place.

These reflections can especially be applied to Charles Jean-Baptiste Sanson, who was essentially a good and charitable man. Before the cruel illness which afflicted his old age, and led him to seek refuge in the small farm of Brie-Comte-Robert, which, since Sanson de

Longval's time, had ever been the country residence of Messieurs de Paris, he led the regular existence of which I have given the exact description. It was on one of the evenings which he spent before his door in the manner I have described that he received a singular visit. A legend had been circulated concerning the executioner's house to the effect that, having found his own son guilty of one of the crimes which are punished by law, the headsman had tried him and carried out his own sentence by slaying his son. The rigidity and austere principles of Charles Jean-Baptiste Sanson were as well known as his kindliness, and the high opinion entertained of him may have given rise to this fable concerning a Brutus of the scaffold. The story was told everywhere and reached Versailles; and Louis XV. was nearly induced to enquire of my great-grandfather whether it was true. However he forgot the whole matter; but certain lords and courtiers, allured by the prospect of a mysterious drama, determined to ascertain the truth.

Charles Jean-Baptiste Sanson was reclining on one of the stone seats which stood on either side of his gate, when a rich carriage drove up, and a man with strongly-marked features stepped out and advanced. Without even raising his three-cornered hat, he walked up to my great-grandfather and asked him whether it was true that he had killed his son.

Charles Jean-Baptiste shrugged his shoulders: 'Indeed, sir,' he replied, 'allow me to say that your question is at least singular. Do you think that a father capable

of shedding his son's blood out of a sense of duty would be foolish enough to reveal such a secret to the first idle courtier who questioned him?'

The stranger turned red: 'Do you know who you are speaking to?' said he; 'I am the Count de Charolais.'

'I am much honoured by your highness's query,' answered my ancestor. 'I am sure, at least, that, in spite of the severity of the laws which punish attempts on the lives of princes, I shall never have to exercise my function in connection with you, for if I were to believe what is said of your highness, as you believed what was said of me, the King, our Sire, has promised to pardon the man who takes your life as you took that of an innocent man.'

The Count turned pale with anger: 'I have a good mind,' replied he, 'to punish your insolence with a thrust of my sword. But this would confirm the absurd calumny which you have just repeated. Know that this accusation against me of the murder of a tiler is the most egregious of falsehoods. If a man did really perish in the manner described, it was not by my hand; the murderer was my brother, Count de Clermont—if such a word as murderer can be applied to a man who is deprived of his senses.'

The story of Count de Charolais firing upon a tiler, to show his dexterity, while the poor artisan was working on a roof, was so generally told at the time, that my great-grandfather had never doubted it. It was said that the King had only condoned the murder

on condition that the reprieve should extend to any relation or friend of the deceased who might attempt to avenge his victim. Charles Jean-Baptiste was, therefore, extremely surprised when he heard the Count denying a crime which was so universally imputed to him, and which he was even accused of regarding as a trifling occurrence. The altogether new version which he gave had a semblance of truth, for his brother had frequently exhibited the behaviour of a lunatic, and my ancestor experienced a revulsion of feeling in favour of this prince who, if public opinion charged him erroneously, was more deserving of pity than of blame. He therefore apologised for his want of politeness, and after satisfying the Count's curiosity by showing him Charles Henri Sanson, who was playing in the garden, unaware of the fate which he was said to have undergone, he ventured a few questions concerning the murder of the tiler. The Count amply confirmed what he had said before; it was his brother, Count de Clermont and Abbé de Saint-Germain-des-prés, who committed the crime while in a fit of mental aberration. As for himself, he had nothing to do with it, and he even invoked the evidence of one of his attendants.

'Chesneau,' said he to a young man who was respectfully waiting at a short distance for his master's orders, 'come forward and tell this good man whether it was my brother, the Abbé, who killed the tiler.'

The young man confirmed Charolais' statement. The conversation, so unpleasantly commenced, ended in mutual confidences. Singularly enough, Count de

Charolais, in spite of his rank, became almost a friend of my great-grandfather's, and never failed to call upon him whenever he came to Paris. The Count, during his sojourn in the capital, lived in a mansion of the Rue des Poissonniers, and was therefore our neighbour. The faithful Chesneau always accompanied him. Jean-Baptiste reaped the benefit of his acquaintance. Since the edict which, under the Regency, had suppressed the right of *travage* and replaced it by a permanent salary of sixteen thousand livres a year, Charles Jean-Baptiste and his father had been very irregularly paid; they were sent from one treasury to another, and the poverty of the State greatly contributed to this delay in giving satisfaction to the legitimate demands of my ancestors. A large sum was owed to them. Charles Sanson II. saw the Regent, who, impressed by the justice of his application, gave him fifty thousand livres in notes of the Royal Bank; but these notes were already discredited; my great-grandfather could never use them, and I have them still in my possession.

Count de Charolais interfered with the King on behalf of Charles Jean-Baptiste, and the latter at length received a considerable sum of which he had the greatest need, for during the time of non-payment he had defrayed the expenses of his office out of his own pocket.

With regard to this prince, my father and grandfather never doubted his innocence, although he has ever been accused of the tiler's murder. The Count was rough,

passionate, and haughty, and his relationship to the real perpetrator of the crime gave rise to a charge which his temper, but not his action, might have confirmed. 'If it was not you, it was your brother,' posterity can say; but this brother was a madman. I cannot otherwise explain the contradictions of the chroniclers of the time, some of whom maintain, while others strenuously deny, an event which has been handed down to us by hearsay. I believe that if, by excess of pride or too chivalrous devotion to his brother, the prince had not disdained to give a public explanation, his memory might now be washed of a stain which it still bears.

Neither was it true that Louis XV. disliked Count de Charolais; far from this, he received him *en tête-à-tête*, and the Count often attended his intimate gatherings. This we heard from the man Chesneau, whom I mentioned before, and who had on more than one occasion waited on the King and the Count at suppers to which only members of the male sex were admitted. Louis XV., worthy pupil of the Regent, had all the defects of his race; but he was very aristocratic, and although he loaded with favour the Duke de Richelieu, the Marquis de Chauvelin, and a few other boon companions, it is certain that he more willingly gave vent to his instincts in the presence of a prince of his own blood, before whom, he imagined, royal majesty appeared less lowered. It was only after the death of Charolais, which occurred in 1760, that the King allowed his favourites to have their own way, and lost the scanty dignity which had partially veiled his faults.

Chesneau was very clever as an armourer and engraver; he manufactured excellent and remarkably elegant guns. His talents were the chief cause of the affection which Charolais felt for him. One day Chesneau was testing a carbine in the gardens of the Hôtel-de-Charolais, when the weapon burst and seriously wounded the young man in the arm and wrist. The Count remembered the chirurgical reputation of my great-grandfather; he requested him to receive the wounded man in his house, and to take care of him. My ancestor probed the wound, which was not dangerous, and two months after Chesneau was cured. The poor fellow was eternally grateful to us, and remained a stout friend to our family.

After the death of Count de Charolais, Chesneau became one of Louis XV.'s servants; Louis XVI. in his turn had him in his service, and as this prince was a passionate lover of mechanical arts, he held Chesneau's merit in high esteem. But when the Revolution broke out the favour of princes became a danger. Chesneau, who had accompanied his master from Versailles to Paris, was driven out of the Tuileries on August 10. He felt the danger of wearing the Court livery, to which he had been accustomed during the whole of his life; he thought of the house in which he had found kindness and hospitality when he was wounded; and he knocked at our door. Jean-Baptiste Sanson was dead; but his son was not less hospitable than his father was. He gave his hand to the old man and offered him a shelter during the storm. Strange to say, the servant of a prince and

two kings had made no fortune in the gilded atmosphere of the Court. He had eaten his daily bread without thinking of the morrow. What little money he received he spent in the satisfaction of his artistic tastes; he bought arms of all countries, and had a valuable collection of these, which was left behind and dispersed.

Idleness and dependence were alike distasteful to Chesneau, and he endeavoured to justify his presence under my grandfather's roof by useful work. For a long time Charles Henri would not suffer him to do anything beyond manufacturing weapons; but when the poor old man had presented his host with magnificent arms, it was impossible to prevent him from giving his attention to the machine which had just replaced all other instruments of torture. On several occasions under the Terror he was heard blaming the assistants for some neglect, and he insisted on seeing to the good order of the guillotine. 'When so many good people perish on the scaffold,' he used to say, 'it is of no use to make them suffer. Kill them, *Mordieu*! since you are obliged, but do not massacre them.'

I was so young when old Chesneau died, that I have but a faint remembrance of him. All that I can recollect is, that he was a sprightly little old man, who used to swing me very agreeably between two large trees in our garden, and who made me a present on January 3, 1803, of a charming little gun on which was engraved, 'Chesneau, to his young friend M. Henri.'

The worthy man died in 1802. I could not then

comprehend all the teachings contained in his life, which began near the throne and ended near the scaffold; but since then I have often thought of Chesneau; and I do not think it possible to select a more perfect impersonation of revolutionary cataclysms than the life of this man, which began with the hospitality of kings and ended with that of the executioner.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ABBE GOMART.

I HAVE now to speak of a third friend of our family, whose attachment was so lasting that it extended from Jean-Baptiste Sanson to my grandfather. This friend was Dom Ange Modeste Gomart, of the order of the Récollets, Abbé of Picpus.

At the end of the reign of Louis XIV. and under the Regency only doctors of the Sorbonne were allowed to accompany culprits to the scaffold ; but under Louis XV. and Louis XVI. this custom was abandoned, and the most suitable ecclesiastics were picked out of every religious order for the purpose. The venerable Father Gomart was designated for the dismal duty of accompanying culprits, and during the greater part of the career of my grandfather he faithfully discharged it. None was more fitted for such functions. His face was kind, his eloquence was soft and persuasive, and the most hardened hearts seldom remained untouched by his words. A deep sentiment of duty had alone induced him to accept a task which he could only accomplish at the cost of a great effort. His strength frequently failed him in the slow and cruel executions

during which he was compelled to remain near the culprit and wipe away the perspiration that flowed from his brow. This always occurred when the punishment by the wheel, so often resorted to by the Parliament, took place. My great-grandfather and my grandfather could see the poor priest's distress, and they often came to his assistance. Once they took him away in such a state of weakness that he was unable to return to the convent where he resided, and he was obliged to accept our hospitality for a few hours. Touched by the affectionate attention which was shown to him, he surmounted the horror which he doubtless felt for the profession of his hosts, and henceforth showed real affection for those who shared his painful duties. He often visited my grandfather, and came to dine at our house every Friday.

It was said that Father Gomart had had a stormy life, and that the peacefulness of his physiognomy concealed a soul which had been strongly tested by passions. He had entered orders after experiencing great sorrows. Neither my father nor my grandfather could ever ascertain his antecedents. They were induced to think that the romance of his youth was much exaggerated by those who spoke of it. He was sufficiently communicative, and, when at our table, he expressed his uneasiness concerning a young niece of his who lived in Paris, and whose light and dissipated habits were for him a constant reason for alarm. 'She is the child of sin,' said he; 'I fear she feels the influence of her birth.'

This girl, whose name was Marie Jeanne de Vaubernier, had been educated at the convent of Saint Anne, under the apparent care of her godfather, M. Billard de Monceau, but in reality under the protection of the worthy Abbé, who had some reasons for concealing from a part of society the affection he bore her. Education had produced no beneficial result on her mind. Her tastes were thoroughly mundane; and, at her earnest entreaty, she was apprenticed to a famous dressmaker named Labille. This change was the cause of her loss. In this situation, which enabled her to see every day the *élégantes* of the Court and town, her coquetry rapidly increased, and filled her with a wish to emulate the brilliant models she saw. Jeanne's beauty was remarkable, and there was no doubt that her success would be great if she could appear on a scene worthy of her charms. The girl fell a prey to her ambition: without her uncle being able to prevent her, she began to lead a life of sin and dissipation.

Jean-Baptiste Sanson heard every day the Abbé Gomart's expressions of grief. He did not speak openly of her dissolute habits, but he alluded to her with bitterness, and he constantly deplored the privilege of fatal beauty which was the chief cause of her loss. My grandfather, Charles Henri Sanson, was then in the full strength and exuberance of youth. His imagination was heated by the priest's description of his niece, and he soon felt a burning wish to make the acquaintance of a girl so beautiful, who was exposed to such peril. There always mingles something noble and chivalrous

with the first impulse of a young heart; and a secret desire, a vague hope, to lead the girl back to the path of virtue was blended in Charles Henri Sanson's mind with feverish impatience to know the belle so often described by the Abbé Gomart.

Charles Henri having learnt that Jeanne de Vaubernier lived in the Rue du Bac, he repaired to the house where she resided, and watched all the persons who entered the house until he saw one who answered to the lady's description. On the very first day he caught sight of a girl whose dazzling freshness, azure eyes, coral lips, and thick auburn hair could only belong to Jeanne. She was accompanied by a servant, who spoke with her in a light tone. They both went to the Tuileries gardens, where my grandfather followed them. He kept at a respectful distance; but his presence was nevertheless discovered. Far from appearing offended, she frequently looked at him in a more provoking than angry manner.

As I said before, Charles Henri Sanson was a handsome man, of elegant and distinguished presence, and he wore the sword and the three-cornered hat with as much grace as any nobleman. This favourable appearance was no doubt the reason of Mdlle. Jeanne's encouraging looks. Charles Henri followed her and her companion not only during their walk, but back to their house.

He repeated his performance on the following day, but he did not speak to the ladies; and this, of course, did not advance the conversion he proposed to attempt. He had just seen them disappear behind the entrance door

and was sadly pondering on the uselessness of human eloquence and the difficulty of salvation, when the curtain of a window of the first floor was slightly raised and Mdlle. Jeanne's charming head appeared behind the panes. This apparition did not disturb him, and by his looks he expressed as well as he could his desire that conversation in dumb show should soon be replaced by words. Either the young person understood or she merely wished to know the intruder's business, for, while Charles Henri Sanson's looks were still centred on the window, he felt a pull at his sleeve and beheld the servant, who made him a deep bow.

'Monsieur le Chevalier,' she said, giving him the vague title it was usual to resort to when the rank of a stranger was not known, 'my mistress, Mdlle. de Vaubernier, has remarked that for the last two days you have followed her, as if you had something to tell her; she sends me to you to ask what that may be?'

'I wish indeed to speak to your mistress, but, not knowing her, I hardly dared to accost her.'

'Mademoiselle can be seen,' answered the servant; 'she is alone, and can receive whoever she pleases. Under what name shall I announce M. le Chevalier?'

'My name is of no importance, for, as I said before, your mistress never heard it. Still, as I have no reasons to conceal it, you may announce the Chevalier de Longval.'

This qualification, which justified the soubrette's inference, appeared to her very agreeable; she disap-

peared and quickly returned saying that Mademoiselle was ready to receive Monsieur le Chevalier.

The dreaded moment was now at hand. Charles Henri Sanson ascended the staircase and entered a cosy and comfortable room. Mdlle. Jeanne was seated in one of those small arm-chairs called *bonheur du jour*, which were then in fashion. She smiled somewhat familiarly on my grandfather, and asked him to take a seat. 'Will you now tell me, Monsieur le Chevalier,' she then said, 'what procures me the honour of your visit?'

What she asked was precisely that which it was difficult to explain. My poor grandsire was as embarrassed as Master Petit-Jean; what he knew the least was how to begin. How could he tell the pretty sinner that he came to save her from Satan's claws? He was very young for the accomplishment of such a task, and his thoughts, while looking at Mdlle. Jeanne, were somewhat mundane.

He resolved to break the ice at once, and confess himself beaten if he met with any resistance. 'Mademoiselle,' said he, with a deep sigh, 'you know, I believe, the Abbé Gomart?'

At these words the young girl rose, her face turned pale; anger appeared in her eye, and in a trembling voice, she said:

'What is this, sir? By what right do you speak of M. Gomart? Are you, then, his spy? I pity you if, at your age, you already undertake such errands, and join in persecuting a poor woman.'

'Mademoiselle,' exclaimed my grandfather, in a

piteous tone, 'can you believe this? I know the Abbé Gomart; but my visit is quite spontaneous. It is because I have often heard him speak of you as of a niece for whom he feels the tenderest affection and who is being led to perdition, that I resolved to seek you, throw myself at your feet, and conjure you not to forsake virtue, to listen to the voice of the worthy priest who speaks to you with the double authority of church and family, and whose dearest wish is for your happiness in this world, and your eternal felicity in the next!'

And, suiting the action to the word, Charles Henri Sanson knelt before Jeanne. At the outset of this harangue, and when my grandfather alluded to the love of the Abbé, she appeared moved and tears came to her eyes; but at the singular conclusion of his speech she burst out laughing, and turning to the servant who was still in the room, she said, unceremoniously, 'What a booby that fellow is!'

One can imagine Charles Henri's embarrassment and stupefaction at the poor success of his eloquence. However, he bravely swallowed the epithet, rose, dusted his knees, and, convinced that he had to deal with a person who was deaf to virtuous exhortations, he abandoned all hope of redeeming her, entered into the spirit of the scene, and even cut a joke at the expense of the Abbé.

It was now Jeanne's turn to be serious. 'Sir,' she said, 'I beg you to speak of M. Gomart with more respect. If his exhortations become ridiculous when

they are repeated by a young man, they are respectable when they come from his own lips. Remember that you are speaking of a member of my family who deserves all my respect.'

The reprimand produced an impression on Charles Henri Sanson. He felt he was not doing his duty to his venerable friend. 'I assure you, mademoiselle,' said he, 'that no one respects M. Gomart more than I do, but my first ideas when I came here were so confused that I hardly know what I have said or what to say. I feel disposed to laugh and to cry. I am glad to see you, so young, so gay, and so beautiful; and then I think of all that your honoured uncle says of you, and I am filled with grief.'

'I owe you many thanks,' answered the girl, in a mischievous tone, 'for the interest you take in me; but as our acquaintance is quite recent, and as my uncle has never spoken to me of a family bearing the name under which you came here, you will permit me to interrupt this edifying conversation and to put off further acquaintance to a future occasion.'

'Oh, mademoiselle!' cried my grandfather, 'do not treat me so harshly. My visit was ridiculous, I admit, but I was led by a high feeling of regard for your uncle, and an irresistible desire to know you. Need I tell you that this desire has increased since I saw you? Do not discard me; allow me to be your friend. Some day, perhaps, my devotion may be of some service to you.'

'There!' said Mdlle. Jeanne, laughing; 'I took

him for my uncle's spy; and now he insists on being mine!'

Either the prospect of knowing what her family thought of her took her fancy, or my grandfather's candour and good faith touched her heart, for she allowed him to see her again, and got to like the admirer who had paid his addresses in so singular a fashion.

Charles Henri Sanson from that time paid frequent visits to Jeanne de Vaubernier. If the present work had scandal for one of its objects, I might insinuate that he was the recipient of her favours; but I can only state what I know, and my grandfather never spoke of the friend of his young days, who was to become the Comtesse du Barry, otherwise than with respect and fondness. He did not deny that he loved her, and that at one time he was quite enslaved by the charms of the belle, who became the mistress of an immoral old king; but he never said that his affection was returned. I cannot, therefore, represent him as the Jean-Jacques Rousseau of a royal Warens, although the contrast between such amours might appear striking enough. The same discretion has not been shown by others, for Charles Henri Sanson's connection with Madame du Barry has been commented upon and travestied in the most absurd manner by the inventors of apocryphal memoirs. They have represented my grandfather as a mysterious and fatal young man, who followed the steps of Jeanne de Vaubernier, predicting her grandeur and his own fall, and mingling with these solemn warnings a

request for favours when she should be Queen of France. They make him appear on two different occasions in a memorable year of the Countess's life, foretelling her fate in dark and ominous terms. I do not wish at present to speak of the awful test which was in store for Charles Henri Sanson when he was called upon to behead his former friend; but I am bound to contradict this tissue of inventions which has been reproduced in various works. The connection of Charles Henri with Jeanne de Vaubernier was such as I have related; and as to the prediction which was attributed to him, it may have sprung from the following circumstance. By a curious coincidence the favourite of Louis XV. was born at Vaucouleurs, in the little village that gave birth to Jeanne d'Arc. The lightness of Jeanne de Vaubernier's mind and manners did not prevent her from entertaining the greatest admiration for the maid of Orleans; and although Jeanne d'Arc was not ranked among the saints, she often invoked her name and called her her protectress. One day as she exclaimed, as was her wont, 'By St. Jeanne, my patroness!' my grandfather observed that she was not like her, and that should fate ever lead her before a king she would not enact the part of Jeanne d'Arc, but rather that of Agnes Sorel.

Jeanne was the daughter of a dressmaker named Becu, *alias* Cautigny, who after Jeanne's birth married one Rançon de Vaubernier, clerk of the customs, on condition that the child should be considered by him as his own. My grandfather had good reason to believe that her real

father was no other than the Abbé Gomart. He styled her his niece, because his position did not allow of his recognising her as his child. For a long time he spoke of her in terms of the strongest affection. Charles Henri Sanson was already in love with her, and he listened to the old man with eager ears; and on more than one occasion he nearly betrayed his secret. For Mdlle. Vaubernier the executioner of Paris was still the Chevalier de Longval; and he could easily maintain his incognito, considering that uncle and niece saw very little or nothing of each other, and Charles Henri was so much under the fascinating influence of the future Dubarry that he never revealed his avocations.

Jeanne was not only gifted with ideal beauty; she was supremely pleasing and graceful. It is not my intention to retrace her biography; it is quite enough for me to have to dwell on the last chapter of it. I shall not, therefore, follow her in her life of adventures and licentiousness, which culminated in her connections with a king. When she became Louis XV.'s favourite Charles Henri Sanson had long ago lost sight of her. The Abbé Gomart had ceased to speak of his daughter. She had vainly attempted to conceal from him her erratic existence. When she became a royal mistress, she remembered her father, and thought, no doubt, that he would readily make the most of her equivocal elevation. Important personages went to see Gomart, and offered him a bishopric; but it was all in vain. The old priest was

not to be allured. He declined every offer, and to the end of his life he remained in his pious retreat, which he only left to discharge his functions and to sit down once a week at the executioner's table.

CHAPTER XVII.

ADVENT OF CHARLES HENRI SANSON.

IT was in the month of January 1754 that Jean-Baptiste Sanson felt the first effects of the malady which deprived him of the use of his limbs. His eldest son, Charles Henri, then fifteen years of age, was tall and strong, and with a little assistance capable of taking his father's place. But it was the second time that the duties of executioner devolved on a minor who might be regarded as wahting in experience; and this led to a contest between us and those who wished to gain possession of the appanage of our family.

As soon as my great-grandfather's illness was known, and although, thanks to Charles Henri's assistance, there had been no interruption in the discharge of the executioner's functions, all sorts of intrigues were resorted to with the sole object of obtaining the office.

It seemed as if Marthe Dubut's life was only preserved in order to see that the inheritance of our functions should be retained in the family. She solicited them on her grandson's behalf; and when the procureur-général expressed a doubt that so young a man could

discharge the duties of executioner, she assured him that Charles Henri was older than his years. The magistrate told her to bring the young man with her on the next day. Marthe Dubut returned accompanied by my grandfather, whose vigorous constitution and precocious gravity completely satisfied the procureur. He, however, declined to invest him officially, and Charles Henri was merely authorised to take his father's place until experience should prove his capacity. This provisional office lasted four-and-twenty years, and it was only when Jean-Baptiste died in 1778 that my grandfather became executioner *en titre*.

Just as Charles Henri and his mother entered the procureur's office they met two men who had been talking with the magistrate. They retired hurriedly, and the voice of the procureur was heard saying to a police officer:

'See these fellows to their lodgings, and if they are not off in two hours, arrest them and take them to the Châtelet.'

The two men seemed embarrassed as they passed near Marthe Dubut; but the latter looked at them steadfastly, saying to her son:

'My child, these are ungrateful relatives of yours; they came here to deprive you of your father's inheritance. They have had an unfavourable reception, it seems. When you see them again after my death do not forget the ill-will they bear you.'

These two men, father and son, were, in fact, connected with us by the eternal union of executioners'

families between each other. They were provincial executioners; and, hearing of my great-grandfather's condition, they had come to Paris to secure his situation. They had been foolish enough to offer the procureur a large sum of money if he would favour them. Their attempt at corruption failed, and they retired in dudgeon, but glad to be let off so easily.

I will not quote the name of these disappointed competitors, as they were connected with my family, and out of deference to their descendants, who still bear that name. The same thing occurred to me during my seven years of service. When it was known that I had but little wish to retain an office which I hated, and which I could hand down to no son, all kinds of machinations were devised to obtain my dismissal or to make sure of my inheritance. Were not such details below the reader's notice, I could tell a curious story on the matter, on the ambition of those who wished to take charge of our grim functions. But let us leave this unpleasant subject, and return to Charles Henri Sanson, who replaced his father during four-and-twenty years before he took his official title. Marthe Dubut died shortly afterwards, proudly conscious of having educated a numerous posterity for the government of the scaffold. Her death wrought a considerable change in the habits of the house; Charles Jean-Baptiste retired to the country with his wife, and Charles Henri virtually became the head of the family. His tenure of office was far longer than that of any other of our race. We have seen him commencing his career in the monstrous tortures

inflicted on Damiens as a punishment for an attempted regicide; we shall soon find him committing a legal regicide. We have seen him executing Lally and La Barre, the victims of intrigue and fanaticism; we shall see him slaying thousands of victims during the Terror. It appears to me impossible to find in any country and under any legislation a more complete incarnation of the executioner than my grandfather, especially during the Revolution. As a minister of popular reprisals, as the instrument of revenge which had accumulated during ages against the excesses of monarchy, he became the principal member of the State. Royalty, the Gironde, the Montagne successively perished by his hands.

The latter part of the reign of Louis XV. was not bloody; Lally and La Barre were the last victims of State and religion; and the Court did not blend cruelty with vice: I only find in my grandfather's notes the names of common criminals of La Tournelle. The only circumstance worthy of notice regarding these cases was, that all these criminals appealed to Parliament against sentences passed by inferior jurisdictions, and that these appeals usually led to the infliction of severer penalties. Seldom did inferior courts inflict the punishment of the wheel; the gibbet was the instrument of death they generally resorted to. Now when the Parliament quashed their decisions it was only to substitute the wheel for the gibbet. In a list of obscure crimes I find a case which is worth mentioning. A horse-dealer, named Chabert, had an only son, who was to take his

father's business after his death. The young man, however, was a debauchee; and not only did he spend his time in idleness or pleasure, but he impatiently waited for the time when by his father's death he would take possession of a small fortune. Amongst his ordinary boon companions was one Cellier, who became his confidant and accomplice in the horrible design young Chabert was meditating. Cellier was perverse and weak, and he was easily persuaded by Chabert to murder the father of the latter. They fixed the day and hour. Chabert gave Cellier a long knife which he had sharpened himself; and as Chabert the elder was returning home between eight and nine o'clock at night, Cellier struck him twice with this weapon. A struggle took place between the murderer and his victim; the son came to the assistance of his accomplice, and both managed to escape. As to Chabert the elder, he fell and died on the spot.

This audacious crime had been committed near the Palais de Justice. The judges of the *Bailliage* took immediate steps for the capture of the assassins. Chabert and Cellier were easily discovered and arrested, and on December 12, 1774, they were both sentenced to die on the wheel. The Parliament confirmed the sentence on the same day, and handed over the culprits to the criminal lieutenant for its immediate execution.

The rapidity with which the whole affair was brought to a culmination shows how abhorred by public conscience were such crimes as Chabert's. Parricide at the time was very rarely committed. I do not think Charles Henri Sanson had been called upon before

this to inflict certain portions of the sentences, such as the amputation of the hand and the burning of the body. Executions were less frequent than one might think during our professional experience. The punishments which my grandfather had to see to were chiefly flogging and marking, usually inflicted on thieves and forgerers. Our modern laws, in France at least, have abolished such corporal punishments. Marking and the pillory disappeared one after the other, although they were still in force in my time. Mutilation, which always preceded the execution of parricides, has fallen into disuse. Cremation of corpses and scattering the ashes to the wind nowadays would only disgrace justice. Only the scaffold, on which simple and rapid death is inflicted, remains ; and—may I be allowed to say so ?—I am convinced that its days are numbered.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NECKLACE AFFAIR.

THIS affair is so well known that to give a detailed account of it is, I think, useless. I will therefore limit myself to a brief summary of the facts which caused the arrest of the Cardinal de Rohan, M. de Cagliostro, M. Retaux de Villette, and Mdlle. Oliva, and brought Madame Jeanne de Valois in contact with the executioner.

One day Madame de Boulainvilliers, wife of the Provost of Paris, met in a village in Burgundy a little girl, who held out her hand, saying: 'My beautiful lady, for the love of God, give something to the descendant of the former Kings of France.'

These words surprised Mdme. de Boulainvilliers; she asked the child to explain her singular way of begging. The curate of the village, who was passing by, told madame that the child said the truth, and that she was the lineal descendant of Henri de Saint-Rémy, bastard of Henry II. and of Nicole de Savigny.

Madame de Boulainvilliers also heard that the child was an orphan, and that she lived on public charity. She took her to Paris; her genealogy was examined,

and it was discovered that the little Jeanne de Valois, her brother, and her sister were really scions of the old royal stock. A petition was presented to the Queen and to M. de Maurepas by the Duke de Brancas-Cériste. Pensions were granted to the three children. The boy entered the navy; he became a lieutenant, and died under the name of Baron de Saint-Rémy de Valois.

In 1780 Jeanne de Valois married a member of Monsieur's private guard, Comte de la Motte. This officer was poor; his wife's portion consisted of a small pension; and this was insufficient for the ambition of La Motte and his wife. Madame de la Motte was considered to be a very beautiful woman; she was witty and attractive, and expressed herself with elegance and facility. She became acquainted with the Cardinal de Rohan, who lent her money and protected her. It is difficult to say whether the prelate's generosity was quite disinterested; but there is reason to believe that it was not, especially as he lent Madame de la Motte, without any plausible reason, a sum amounting to one hundred and twenty thousand livres, previous to the necklace affair. Howbeit Madame de la Motte enjoyed the intimacy of the fastidious prelate, and discovered his secret aspirations. She found out that his desire was to have over the Queen, who, it was said, exercised a sovereign domination over her husband, the same influence as Cardinal Mazarin had had with Anne d'Autriche. She flattered his hobby, and used it as the basis of her future fortunes.

The almost stupid simplicity through which M. de

Rohan fell a victim to the snare of this wily woman will afford an idea of the prelate's intellectual calibre. Mdme. de la Motte persuaded the Cardinal that she was on terms of intimacy with the Queen; that, conscious as she was of the Cardinal's eminent qualities, she had so often spoken of him to her Majesty that the Cardinal was on his way to favour; that Marie Antoinette authorised him to send her the justification of his supposed blunders during his embassy in Austria; that she further wished to have with M. de Rohan a correspondence which was to remain secret until she could openly manifest her preference for him; that Madame de la Motte was to be the bearer of this correspondence, the result of which must infallibly lead the Cardinal to the highest favour and influence.

Was Madame de la Motte at all connected with the Queen? Most historians deny the fact. Anyhow her invention was successful. The Cardinal believed her and was quite enthusiastic; he richly rewarded her for the forged letters which she gave him as coming from the Queen; and Madame de la Motte was doubtless encouraged by his simplicity.

A magnificent necklace had been ordered by Louis XV. of MM. Boemer and Bossange, the crown jewellers. It was made for Madame du Barry. The King died before it was finished; his favourite mistress was exiled by the new monarch, and the beautiful jewel remained in the hands of the makers. They offered it to the Queen; but the price, which amounted to 1,800,000 livres, was thought too high. Madame de la Motte saw the necklace. The jewellers told her they were much

embarrassed by the Queen's refusal to purchase it; they were impeded in their trade by such a considerable outlay of money, and they offered to make a rich present to whoever could find a buyer. The Countess thought that the Queen would be only too glad to get the necklace if she had not to pay for it; and she inferred that Marie Antoinette could not but feel very grateful to the person who would get it for her. Her husband, M. de la Motte, entered into the plot. They obtained the support of the Comte de Cagliostro, who exercised a powerful influence over M. de Rohan; and at length Madame de la Motte persuaded the Cardinal that the Queen wished to purchase the necklace with her own money; that, as a token of good feeling towards the Cardinal, she requested him to buy the jewel in her name; and that she would send him a receipt written and signed with her own hand. This document was handed to M. de Rohan by Madame de la Motte; it was dated from Trianon, and signed 'Marie Antoinette de France.' How the Cardinal could fail to discover the forgery when he saw this signature, it is difficult to say. The Queen, like all the princesses who had preceded her on the throne, signed her Christian name only, and the words 'de France,' due to the imagination of the forger (Retaux de Villette) were a sufficient indication of the origin of the document.

But he had no suspicion; and really believing that he was acting in accordance with the wishes of his sovereign, and thinking that the highest favour would be accorded to him for his intervention, he sent for the jewellers, and

showed them the Queen's receipt. They accepted the arrangements he proposed, and on February 1 the casket was handed to Madame de la Motte at Versailles; and it was remitted by her, in the Cardinal's presence, to a so-called valet-de-chambre of the royal household, who was no other than the forger, Retaux de Villette. This bold fraud was brought to a conclusion by the departure for England of M. de la Motte with the rich booty.

After thus gaining possession of the necklace, Madame de la Motte was not satisfied; she hoped to compromise the Queen and the Cardinal still more. She therefore set to work again. Retaux de Villette wrote other letters, by which the Queen informed M. de Rohan that, being unable to give him public marks of her esteem, she wished to see him between eleven and midnight in the shrubs of Versailles. Madame de la Motte had met a girl of the name of Oliva, whose resemblance to Marie Antoinette had struck her, and who acted the part of the Queen. The meeting took place in the Baths of Apollo. Mdlle. Oliva's performance was admirable; she gave a rose to the Cardinal, who was choking with emotion, and then sent him away in a state of high exultation.

But the date fixed for the payment of the first instalment of the price of the necklace was drawing near, and the jewellers were somewhat uneasy. They tried to ascertain whether the necklace was in the Queen's possession; but they could not obtain an audience, and they soon discovered that they were the victims of a robbery. In their indignation they made known the

whole affair; and it was reported to M. de Breteuil, minister of the King's household. M. de Breteuil was the Cardinal's personal enemy, and he eagerly seized the opportunity of manifesting his dislike. He had a secret conversation with the Queen; informed her of the rumours that were being circulated concerning herself, the Cardinal, and Madame de la Motte; and besought her to tell him if she had any reason to fear a public investigation.

The Queen answered that she had no apprehension whatever, and that the sooner the mystery was explained the better. On August 15 the Cardinal, as great almoner, was to officiate in the chapel. He was about to assume his religious robes when an usher came to inform him that the King wished to speak to him.

Louis XVI., Marie Antoinette, and M. de Breteuil were together when the Cardinal appeared in the royal presence. The King spoke to him in a strongly irritated tone:

'Sir, you have, I believe, bought diamonds at Boemer's?'

'I have, your Majesty,' answered De Rohan.

'Where are they?'

M. de Rohan hesitated. 'I thought, Sire,' said he, at length, 'that these diamonds were in the possession of the Queen.'

'Who directed you to send them to the Queen?'

'A lady named Madame la Comtesse de la Motte Valois. She gave me a letter from the Queen, whose orders I thought I obeyed by purchasing the diamonds.'

The Queen here interrupted him. 'How could you believe, sir,' she exclaimed, 'that after looking upon you with disfavour for more than eight years I could select you for such a piece of business, and through the intervention of such a woman?'

'I now perceive,' answered the Cardinal, 'that I have been cruelly deceived. My wish to please your Majesty led me astray. I will pay for the necklace . . . . I am the victim of a fraud of which before this I had no suspicion. I am extremely sorry.'

He produced his pocket-book, and selected the Queen's receipt. The King looked at it: 'Why,' he said, 'this is neither the Queen's handwriting nor her signature. How could you, a prince of the house of Rohan, and the great almoner of France, believe that the Queen signed "Marie Antoinette de France?" Everybody knows that queens only sign their Christian names.'

The Cardinal was getting more and more disconcerted. He was obliged to lean against a table. The King saw this, and told him to go into an adjoining room, where he could write his justification. M. de Rohan obeyed, and reappeared a quarter of an hour after, with a paper which he handed to Louis. At the door he found M. de Jouffroy, lieutenant of the guards, who arrested him, and handed him over to M. d'Agoult, who took him to the Bastille.

Madame de la Motte was arrested on the following day. She denied having in any way participated in the theft of the necklace, and she charged M. de Cagliostro with the crime, alleging that he persuaded the Cardinal to buy

the necklace. Cagliostro and his wife were arrested. Madame de la Motte hoped, no doubt, to escape by insinuating that the Cardinal as well as Cagliostro was responsible for the necklace; but, unfortunately for her, Mademoiselle Oliva was arrested in Brussels, and her revelations threw some light on the mystery. Some time after, Retaux de Villette was taken, and he was confronted with M. de la Motte. In the night of the 29th all the accused were transferred from the Bastille to the Conciergerie, and on September 5 letters patent of the King sent the case before the Parliament.

These letters were couched in strong and bitter terms, and brought against the Cardinal a terrible charge. The affair, which was now publicly known, produced deep sensation. The nobility and the clergy were equally interested in the issue of the trial, the two principal parties being the Queen and a prince of the Church. The trial was commenced on December 22. Madame de la Motte, who was dressed with great care and elegance, was brought in; her face was undisturbed, and she answered all the questions put to her by the president with the utmost coolness and presence of mind. The Cardinal appeared after her. The members of the bench showed him much regard, and it was easy to perceive that, perhaps through a spirit of opposition to the Court of Versailles, they were favourable to him.

On December 29 the procureur-général read out his conclusions; they were extremely hostile to the Cardinal. The procureur demanded such humiliating admissions as M. de Rohan could not have made, and which must

have left him in prison for the remainder of his life. These conclusions met with strong disapprobation on the part of the bench. Sentence was pronounced on the 31st. The court condemned La Motte, *in contumaciam*, to hard labour for life; Jeanne de Saint-Rémy Valois, wife of La Motte, to amende honorable, and afterwards to be whipped, and marked on both shoulders with the letter V, and also to imprisonment for life; Retaux de Villette to banishment for life. Mademoiselle Oliva was acquitted; so was M. de Cagliostro. As to the Cardinal, he was cleared of all charges. This judgment was received with a kind of enthusiasm. Public opinion considered it, in some sort, as a victory. The judges were cheered, writes De Besenval, and so warmly received by the people that they made their way through the crowd with difficulty.

Madame de la Motte had been left in ignorance of the penalties pronounced against her. As the holidays of the Parliament began on the day of judgment, the execution of the sentence was deferred. It was only six months later that it was communicated to the accused. On June 21 M. de Fleury, the procureur, sent for the executioner and informed him that Madame de la Motte had shown great violence of temper during her incarceration, and that it was to be feared that she would resist. He requested him to arrange the execution of the sentence so as to avoid scandal. A magistrate, who was present, suggested that Madame de la Motte should be gagged, like M. de Lally; but Charles Henri Sanson objected, reminding him that the compassion which had been evinced for the old general would be more widely felt and ex-

pressed if a woman were subjected to the same violence. It was eventually decided that the execution should take place in the court of the Conciergerie. Charles Henri Sanson asked the procureur to entrust to him the management of this unpleasant affair, in which judgment was far more necessary than strength.

He began by obtaining information concerning Madame de la Motte's habits, and he heard from the gaoler that she was on very friendly terms with his wife, who attended her in the prison. Following the instructions of the executioner, this woman entered the prisoner's room, and told her that she was wanted outside. Madame de la Motte was in bed; she turned her face towards the wall, and said that she was sleepy and could not rise so early. The gaoler's wife then told her that it was her counsel who wished to speak with her. This effectually roused Madame de la Motte, who jumped out of bed, and lost no time in dressing. As she was leaving the room, one of my grandfather's assistants, who was behind the door, seized her arm and thrust it under his; another assistant did the same on the other side; but Madame de la Motte, displaying such strength as could hardly have been expected from a woman, shook away their grasp and retreated towards the door. Charles Henri, however, had come forward and was standing against it. Madame de la Motte stopped, and looked at him with glistening eyes. 'She was,' writes my grandfather, 'rather small in stature, but extremely well made. Her countenance was sufficiently pleasant to conceal for a time the irregularity of her features;

her expressive physiognomy was full of charm, and it was only after minute examination that one discovered that her nose was very sharp, that her expressive mouth was large, and that her eyes were somewhat small. What was remarkable in her was the thickness and length of her hair, and also the whiteness of her skin, and the smallness of her hands and feet. She wore a silk *déshabillé*, striped brown and white, and covered with small nosegays of roses. Her head-dress was an embroidered cap.' While she was eyeing Charles Henri as if about to leap at him, the other assistants and four police officers surrounded her. She perceived that resistance was useless, and, speaking to my grandfather, who had taken off his hat: 'What do you want with me?' she said.

'We wish you to listen to your judgment, madame,' answered the executioner.

Madame de la Motte shuddered; she clenched her hands, looked down, and then raising her head: 'Very well,' she said. The two assistants, who had at first tried to secure her, came forward; but she motioned them away, and advanced before them.

When the procession reached the hall where a parliamentary committee was sitting, the clerk read out the judgment. At the very first words which proclaimed her guilt, the strongest emotion appeared on Madame de la Motte's face. Her eyes rolled in their sockets; she bit her lips, and the hitherto pretty face now seemed to be the mask of a fury. Charles Henri foresaw a storm and approached her: and it was well that he did so, for as the clerk came to the penalties, the unhappy woman's

rage burst out with extraordinary violence. She fell backwards so suddenly that her head must have been fractured on the stones had not my grandfather caught her in his arms. It was impossible to finish the reading of the sentence. Madame de la Motte's strength increased as the consciousness of her fate flashed through her mind; and a protracted struggle ensued between her and the assistants who attempted to pinion her. She was at length carried down to the court. The scaffold was erected opposite the gate, which had been left open. But it was six o'clock in the morning, and only a limited number of persons were looking on. She was stretched on the platform, and received twelve stripes. She never ceased shrieking while the punishment was being inflicted. She invoked vengeance on the head of Cardinal de Rohan; and she added that it was her own fault that she had suffered the disgrace which had been inflicted on her, since, had she said but one word, she would have been hanged instead of having been flogged.

The second part of the sentence had no doubt escaped her, for when she was seated on the platform she remained motionless, as if completely subdued and powerless. Charles Henri Sanson thought the moment was well chosen for the completion of the penalty. Her dress had been torn, and her shoulder was bare; he took an iron from the grate and applied it to her skin. Madame de la Motte uttered a wild shriek, and, writhing in the grasp of one of the assistants who were holding her, she bit his hand with such fury that she took a piece of flesh off. She struggled again, and it was with

the greatest difficulty that the iron could be applied to the other shoulder.

Justice was now satisfied. Madame de la Motte was put in a fly and taken to the Salpétrière. As she was alighting she tried to rush under the wheels, and a few moments afterwards she thrust the sheet of her bed into her throat in a frenzied attempt to choke herself. Her imprisonment lasted ten months. She escaped, some said, through the connivance of the Government, in fear of the revelations which M. de la Motte threatened to make unless his wife were released. Others asserted that Madame de la Motte's husband bribed a sister of charity, who assisted her in making her escape. A sentry who was under her window gave her a man's dress, by means of which she left the Salpétrière and reached England. She joined her husband in London, where she died in 1791.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE AUTO-DA-FÉ OF VERSAILLES.

IT was in 1788 that the last instance of a sentence of breaking on the wheel occurred. The following were the circumstances:

In the Rue de Satory at Versailles lived an elderly smith of the name of Mathurin Louschart. This man was the type of artisans of former days: he was full of prejudices and antipathies, and a lover of tradition. Fully persuaded of the superiority of his profession over any other, he would not have exchanged his leather apron for a magistrate's robes or an abbé's cassock. He abhorred new ideas; the Montmorencies, the Rohans of the time had not the supreme contempt which he professed for equality, saying that even if a donkey's ears were ever so much shortened, it was impossible to make a horse of it. However, excepting his eccentric ways and odd ideas, Mathurin Louschart, or rather Master Mathurin, as he was called in the neighbourhood, was a good man, who was always true to his word, was scrupulously honest, and often showed much kindness and charity to his poorer brethren. He had a son named Jean, a fine and handsome young man, whom he loved dearly. It was difficult to say of which Master Mathurin was prouder

—his superior capacity as a smith, or of his child. He sent him to school and gave him the best education money could procure. But while he was glad to see his son brought up as a gentleman, he was so enamoured with his own calling that he prevailed on Jean to adopt it.

The young man yielded to his father's wishes with some regret; but, although he attended to his professional duties with tolerable industry, he nevertheless went on reading; and he took more interest in Jean-Jacques Rousseau than in shoeing horses. The father did not oppose this, although the difference of education and ideas which existed between them became a cause of serious quarrel between father and son. Revolution was brewing, and Jean Louschart supported the new ideas which filled the masses with extreme enthusiasm. Jean had the greatest respect for Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Diderot, while Master Mathurin regarded them as creatures of hell. One day at dinner the young man, carried away by his enthusiasm, extolled the merits of these philosophers. Master Mathurin, who hitherto had never suspected that his son was a free-thinker, was at first astounded at his audacity; but his stupefaction was soon succeeded by anger. A dispute followed, and Jean was peremptorily ordered to hold his tongue. The young man who, although respectful, was passionate and headstrong, disobeyed the injunction, and retorted that his father had a novel way of settling a discussion. This of course did not mend matters; and at length Master Mathurin showed his son the door. It was in vain that Jean expressed his regret and readiness

to apologise; the old smith would listen to no excuse, and turned him out.

Shortly before this a widow slightly related to Master Mathurin had come to live in his house together with her daughter. Madame Verdier—such was the new-comer's name—had taken a dislike to Jean; and, although the young man felt no great affection for her, he was smitten by the charms of Helen Verdier, her daughter, and his affection was returned. No doubt father and son might have made it up, and Jean was anxious for a reconciliation—for more reasons than one; but Madame Verdier interfered and incited Master Mathurin to discard Jean for ever. She even went further; her influence with him was so great that she persuaded him to become Jean's rival by suing for Helen's hand. The poor girl was ordered by her mother to forget Jean and prepare to marry Master Mathurin.

Jean had easily found work in Versailles; he was employed by a man who afterwards became a notorious member of the Convention, Lecointre. He took his master's advice; and, as it was evident that Mathurin wished to marry out of spite against his son, the latter determined to elope with his sweetheart. Jean punctually repaired to his father's house on the night appointed for his flight with Helen; he waited outside for some time, but Helen did not appear. He was getting uneasy when from the house issued shrieks which he immediately recognised as Helen's. He broke the door open without a moment of hesitation, and beheld Madame Verdier, who, having, no doubt, discovered the projected

elopement, was unmercifully beating her daughter, while Master Mathurin was grimly looking on.

The sight was too much for Jean; he rushed forward to protect his sweetheart; but his father stopped him, and, with the utmost violence, upbraided him for what he styled his infamous conduct. Madame Verdier now came forward also, and goaded the old smith to such a climax of fury that he spat in his son's face. Jean had suffered in silence; but this last insult was too much for his temper, and he retorted with words of extreme bitterness. At this Mathurin's rage knew no bounds; he seized a crowbar and aimed a terrific blow at Jean. The passage in which this scene was taking place was so narrow that the bar struck against the wall as it came down, and Jean was able to leap aside. Helen, who was gazing with terror at the awful contest, cried to Jean to fly. The young man followed her advice, and made for the door while his father was raising his crowbar for the second time; but the woman Verdier had anticipated him and was resolutely standing against it. Mathurin struck a second blow, and again missed his aim. As he was raising the crowbar for the third time, Jean rushed past him, and tried to enter the workshop, whence he intended to jump through the window into the street; but the door of the workshop was also locked, and his father was giving chase; as he tried to break it open, a heavy mass of iron whizzed just above his head, and struck one of the panels, which it shattered to pieces. Old Louschart had laid down his crowbar, and had hurled his heavy hammer. He now came up and grappled with

Jean, who now felt that he could only save his life by mastering him. He seized his father's arm, as it was poising the hammer over his head for the fourth time, and tried to wrench the weapon from his grasp. The old man, however, was yet possessed of great physical strength ; but his son was young and muscular, and he succeeded in overthrowing him. He disarmed him, tore himself away from his grasp, rose to his feet, and took to flight. As he was crossing the threshold, hardly knowing what he was about, he threw behind him the heavy hammer, and rushed out. So rapid was his flight that he did not hear a cry in the workshop after he had flung back the hammer. Master Mathurin had just risen from the ground ; the heavy mass of iron struck him above the right eyebrow and fractured his skull.

Madame Verdier came to the old smith's assistance ; but he was quite dead. The neighbours, roused by Helen's cries, entered the house. They were told by Madame Verdier that Jean had murdered his father. Mathurin was liked, in spite of his defects ; and great indignation prevailed. The news soon spread throughout Versailles, and was a subject of general conversation from the palace to the workshop. The crime of parricide occurred so rarely that the death of Mathurin excited deep emotion ; and the King himself ordered M. de Lamoignon to proceed against the culprit without a moment's delay.

Madame Verdier's evidence was taken ; she swore that she had seen Jean aim the deadly blow. As to Helen, the tragic events of the night had so bewildered

her, that no importance was attached to her evidence. Jean was arrested at Sèvres, and led back to Versailles, amidst vociferous groans and hisses from the crowd. When he was taken, he expressed the most unfeigned surprise; those who took him to prison informed him of the death of his father, and of the presumptions which led the public and the judicial authorities to believe that he was the murderer. The news filled him with such grief that he at first seemed to forget that he was charged with an awful deed. When he fully understood that he was taken for the assassin of the man whose death he so deeply lamented, he vehemently protested. He was taken to his father's house, and when he saw the old man's corpse, he rushed forward and passionately kissed the pale face. Madame Verdier's evidence was, however, so precise that the magistrate who accompanied him took his grief for a display of sheer hypocrisy. He questioned Jean, and as the latter was asserting that he had merely protected himself, and had not raised a finger against the old smith, the magistrate pointed to the wound and then to the hammer. Jean seemed suddenly to remember that he had thrown the hammer back into the house as he was running away. He understood what had taken place, but saw that it would be impossible for him to convince his judges of his innocence. He stated the truth to the magistrates, adding that he would not defend himself, and that as he had, although unwittingly, caused the death of the man from whom he had received life, he would suffer without a murmur.

The trial took place at the Châtelet. But, mean-

while, public feeling had greatly altered as the facts of the case transpired. Jean had many friends too, and they strived to show not only that he was not guilty, but that he had been the patient victim of the whims and acrimonious temper of old Mathurin. They succeeded so well that public sympathy, in Versailles, was thoroughly aroused in the prisoner's interest, and Jean's trial assumed the importance of a political affair. As he had announced, Jean did not defend himself; he would not even discuss or contradict Madame Verdier's evidence; and the court sentenced him to die on the wheel. The prisoner, however, was not condemned to amende honorable, which included the amputation of the hand; and the judges added a *retentum* to their sentence by which Jean Louschart was to be secretly strangled before his limbs were crushed.

Now public opinion, in Versailles, had already settled that Jean was innocent, and the news of his forthcoming execution caused general excitement. The execution was appointed to take place on August 3. On the morning of the 2nd, Charles Henri Sanson sent from Paris two carts containing the instruments of torture, and beams and boards for the erection of the scaffold. He himself went to Versailles in the afternoon. The emotion caused by Jean Louschart's impending fate was limited to Versailles; and my grandfather was so thoroughly convinced that he had to deal with a vulgar criminal that he was greatly surprised when he found the whole town in a fever. The Place Saint-Louis was covered with so great a multitude that the assistants and

carpenters could hardly go on with their work. No hostility was manifested, however; the crowd was noisy, but its mood was gay; the name of Jean was scarcely pronounced; and the workmen who were erecting the platform were merely jeered. One of the carpenters having, however, struck an urchin who was throwing stones at him, cries of 'Death!' were uttered; in an instant all the mocking faces became dark and threatening; the assistants and carpenters were attacked, and their lives were in great danger. But a body of a hundred men, who could easily be identified as smiths by their athletic proportions and brawny faces, interfered, and partly by strength, partly by persuasion, they induced the crowd to retreat.

My grandfather had not bestowed much attention on this popular demonstration, but he became more attentive when the interference of the smiths took place. He felt convinced that the crowd was obeying a by-word, and that if it had retreated it was merely because it preferred to wait for a more favourable time for action. He directed his assistants to finish the erection of the scaffold as quickly as possible, and returned to Paris, where he lost no time in acquainting the proper authorities with his apprehensions.

Political emotion had already given rise to many storms in the provinces. Normandy, Bretagne, Béarn had risen on behalf of their parliaments, attacked in their privileges. Dauphiné had taken a decisive step; after a long series of riots, the representatives of the three orders, nobility, clergy, and *tiers-état*, had assembled,

and proclaimed their provincial independence. Paris, however, had heard with indifference of the arrest of two members of the Parliament d'Éprémenil and Monsabert; and the authorities had no idea that a struggle between the Government and the people could take place in the very town inhabited by the King and his Court, so that only a few soldiers were sent to Versailles.

The multitude which had thronged the Place Saint-Louis retired during the night; only a few young men remaining to watch what took place around the scaffold. It was rumoured that Helen Verdier had thrown herself at the Queen's feet, imploring the reprieve of the culprit, and that Marie Antoinette had prevailed on the King to grant it. The news had doubtless led to the dispersion of the crowd.

Charles Henri Sanson made the most of the circumstance. He caused a strong paling to be erected around the scaffold; and, on their side, the executive magistrates took upon themselves to advance the hour of execution.

It was two o'clock in the morning when my grandfather left the Place Saint-Louis for the prison, and he remarked that the men who were still in the place dispersed in different directions as he went away. Jean Louschart was stretched on his pallet when he entered his cell. The doomed man rose and calmly surveyed him. The clerk of the parliament read aloud the sentence, to which he listened with much attention. He then murmured a few words, among which only those

of 'Poor father!' were heard, and he added in a loud voice:

'In two hours I shall justify myself before him.'

On being told that it was time to depart for the scaffold, he turned to the executioner, saying, 'You can be in no greater hurry than I am, sir.'

At half-past four o'clock the cart moved in the direction of the Place Saint-Louis. The executive magistrates were in hopes that, owing to the *retentum*, everything could be finished before the population awoke. But they soon perceived their mistake. The streets were swarming with people. The whole of the population was astir. Deafening clamours burst from the crowd as the cart appeared, and it was with the greatest difficulty that it made its way. The prisoner did not even seem to suspect that all this movement was caused by the sympathy people felt for him. At the corner of the Rue de Satory a piercing cry was heard, and a girl was seen waving her handkerchief. Jean Louschart looked up, and rising to his feet, he tried to smile, and exclaimed, 'Farewell, Helen, farewell!' At that moment a smith of high stature and herculean proportions, who was walking near the cart, cried in a thundering voice:

'It is *au revoir* you should say, Jean. Are good fellows like you to be broken on the wheel?'

A horseman drove him back, but applause and cheers came from every quarter. It was obvious, by the pale faces of the clerk, the policemen, and the soldiers who surrounded the cart, that the agents of the law were anything but confident. The scaffold, however, was reached

without accident. The crowd was thickly packed on the Place Saint-Louis. As the cart stopped, Jean Louschart addressed a question to the priest who was sitting near him, and my grandfather heard the latter answer, 'To save you.' 'No, father,' said the doomed man in a feverish voice and with some impatience; 'if I am innocent of the intention of committing the crime, my hands are nevertheless stained with blood. I must die, and I wish to die.—Be quick, sir,' he added, turning to my grandfather.

'Sir,' answered Charles Henri, pointing to the infuriated masses that were already breaking through the paling, 'if there is a man here who is in danger of death it is not you.'

Hardly were the words out of his mouth than a tempest of groans and screams burst forth. The paling was broken and trodden under foot, and hundreds of men rushed on the scaffold. The smith who had already spoken to Louschart was among the foremost. He seized the prisoner in his muscular arms, cut his bonds, and prepared to carry him off in triumph. An extraordinary scene now took place; Jean Louschart struggled violently against his saviours, turned towards the executioner and begged for death with the earnestness usually displayed by other culprits in asking for mercy. But his friends surrounded him, and at length succeeded in carrying him away.

My grandfather's position was perilous in the extreme. Separated from his assistants, alone amidst a crowd that knew him but too well, he really thought that

his last hour was at hand. His countenance probably betrayed his thoughts, for the tall smith came up to him, and seized his arm: 'Fear nothing, Charlot,[1]' he cried; 'we don't want to harm you, but your tools. Henceforth, Charlot, you must kill your customers without making them suffer.' And speaking to the crowd: 'Let him pass, and take care he is not hurt.'

This harangue calmed the crowd, and my grandfather was allowed to withdraw. In less time than it takes to write this account the scaffold and all its accessories were broken into pieces, which were thrown on the pile prepared for the burning of the prisoner's body; and the terrible wheel was placed on the summit as a kind of crown. Fire was set to the heap, and men and women, holding each other by the hand, formed an immense ring and danced around the crackling pile until it was reduced to ashes.

[1] This name, popularly given to Charles Henri Sanson, has been retained and is still familiarly given to the executioner.

CHAPTER XX.

MARIE ANNE JUGIER, MY GRANDMOTHER.

IN the preceding chapter I have shown the last appearance of the wheel as an instrument of death. The origin of this punishment is not certain; but it is generally believed that the fable of Ixion suggested it; and there can be no doubt that if, later, it was so conspicuous among the penalties of Christian societies, it was because it was a substitute for crucifixion, which could not have been retained without fear of committing sacrilege.

I have already given instances of the singular liking shown by parliaments for this punishment. It is easy to imagine how often it was resorted to when it is remembered that the old criminal legislation of France inflicted it in *one hundred and fifteen kinds of crimes.* Francis I. and his minister Cardinal Duprat were responsible for this excess of barbarity. An edict issued under the reign of Francis made of the wheel the special punishment of highwaymen and burglars, the gibbet being reserved for murderers. Human life, at the time, was, it appeared, less sacred than property, since attempts on the former were less severely punished than raids

on the latter. This anomaly could not long continue; under subsequent reigns, thieves, assassins, parricides were broken on the wheel with additional or mitigated inflictions, according to the nature of the crime. The gibbet became a secondary punishment, and almost fell into disuse in comparison with its flourishing period under the superintendence of our famous predecessor Tristan l'Hermite.

From 1770 to 1780 I find in my grandfather's notes that culprits broken on the wheel were far more numerous than those who perished by the noose. In 1769, on January 18, Etienne Charles and François Legros, sentenced for murder; on the 21st, André-Étienne Petit, for common theft; on April 27, François Boussin, for theft and murder; on August 22, Jean Brouage, for stealing linen; on September 22, Jean Lemoine, for murder; in 1771, on August 19, François Alain, for murder; in 1772, on January 16, Louis François Daux, for murder; on the 29th, François Abraham Lecerf, for theft; on August 4, Joseph Savel, for theft; on December 7, Marie Picard, her son Pierre, aged seventeen, and a man named Nicolas Rose, for robbing and murdering one Michel Moré; in 1775, on January 14, Edme Brochart, for theft and murder; on May 16, Charlotte Beuton, for murder; on September 27, Paul Darel, for theft; in 1777, on July 11, J. B. Campagnard, for murder; in 1778, on July 21, Jacques Neuiller, for theft; on September 2, Mathurin Barsagoult, for the same crime.

I have only quoted a few examples; otherwise I

could fill half a volume with the names of culprits who were broken. The wheel always excited the disgust of the public at large, and all the petitions of the deputies to the States-General in 1789 asked for its abolition.

Before entering into the period of the Revolution, I may be allowed to say a few words respecting my grandmother, and her management of our house. The death of Marthe Dubut and the departure of Jean-Baptiste Sanson had brought into it an atmosphere of loneliness. Charles Henri Sanson soon felt this and thought of marrying. He had retained certain elegant habits and was passionately fond of shooting; and his frequent absence from home, and his consequent inability to see to the management of his household affairs, made him especially eager to find a wife as soon as possible.

The environs of Montmartre were then cultivated by market gardeners. Charles Sanson often traversed these parts in his excursions. He became acquainted with one of the gardeners, who had a numerous family. His eldest daughter, Marie Anne Jugier, was, in every respect, an excellent person. My grandfather had often admired her, and he sued for her hand, although she was thirty-two years of age—six years older than himself. His suit was accepted, and on January 20, 1765, the wedding took place in the church of Saint-Pierre Montmartre.

Although my grandmother was, as I have just observed, older than my grandfather by six years, she survived him more than twelve years. I knew her

well, and it is to her that I was indebted for many details which enabled me to complete her husband's notes on a memorable period of French history.

Charles Henri Sanson had every reason to be satisfied with the choice he had made. His excellent wife managed his household with great skill and judgment, and won every heart by her gentle disposition and kindly manner. Hardly a year had elapsed since her marriage when Jean-Baptiste Sanson returned, on the occasion of the execution of Lally Tollendal. Some time afterwards the old man lost his wife, Madeleine Tronson; he left his farm of Brie-Comte-Robert and came back to the old house in Paris. He lingered for several years, and during the course of his gradual decline Marie Anne Jugier constantly attended him. Her devotion to the patient was unceasing. Jean-Baptiste expired in August 1778, and it was his daughter-in-law who closed his eyes. My grandfather was superintending an execution on the Place du Châtelet at the moment of the old man's death. He only heard of the sad news on his return.

The Abbé Gomart opened Jean-Baptiste's will. The deceased expressed a wish to be buried with his father in the Saint-Laurent church. An old sexton showed me when I was a boy the stones which cover the graves of my two ancestors. Jean-Baptiste's property was equally divided between his sons, who, as it has been said before, were very numerous. Charles Henri Sanson was therefore compelled to sell the mansion of the Faubourg Poissonnière, and the money was shared between the heirs. My grandfather bought a house in

the Rue Neuve Saint-Jean (now the Rue du Château d'Eau), and settled there with his family. His fortune was, of course, considerably smaller than his father's, but he nevertheless lived comfortably enough on his income and private means from 1778 to 1789.

THE SAFE-CONDUCT.

Before they met on the scaffold, my grandfather was twice in presence of Louis XVI. These two meetings occurred at the beginning of the year 1789. The impoverished state of the funds had for a considerable time prevented the payment of the sums due to Charles Henri Sanson; and as he had hitherto lived in somewhat expensive style, he found himself in serious pecuniary difficulties. In a petition which he sent to the King, he explained his embarrassed position, and he was summoned to Versailles a few days afterwards. Louis received him in his private apartments. The interview was short, but my grandfather remembered every detail of it. The King was standing near a window which opened on the park. Charles Henri, intimidated by the prestige of royalty, dared advance no further than the threshold, so that the few words they spoke were exchanged at some distance. Louis wore a lilac coat embroidered with gold, short breeches and pumps; the blue and red ribbons of the order of Saint-Louis hung across his white satin waistcoat. A lace collar and frill was partly covered by a loose cravat, which showed the prominent muscles of the neck. The King was of strong

but common build. His hair was powdered and curled, and was tied with a ribbon at the back of the neck.

'You have sent in a claim for the sums that are due to you,' said he, without turning round or looking at my grandfather. 'I have ordered that your accounts be examined and settled without delay; but the State is poor for the present, and your claim is for 136,000 livres, I believe?'

'I thank your Majesty with as much gratitude as respect,' answered Charles Henri Sanson; 'but I beseech your Majesty to remember that my debts have so considerably increased that my creditors will not wait any longer, and that they threaten my liberty.'

At these words the King turned round and cast a rapid glance at my grandfather. 'Wait a moment,' said he; 'I must see to this directly.'

He rang a bell which was within his reach. An officer appeared.

'Monsieur de Villedeuil,' said the King, 'fetch me a safe-conduct, and direct it to the names I will tell you.'

The paper was procured, and the King, who had an excellent memory, dictated the names of my grandfather which he had seen on the petition. This curious safe-conduct, which I still possess, is couched in the following terms:

'*By order of the King.*

'His Majesty, being desirous of giving M. Charles Henri Sanson the means of attending to his occupations,

has given him a safe-conduct for a space of three months, during which his Majesty orders his creditors to take no proceedings against him; to all solicitors, police officers, or others not to arrest or molest him in any way; to all gaolers of prisons not to receive him; and if, in spite of the said prohibition, he be imprisoned, his Majesty orders that he be immediately set free. His Majesty also orders that the present safe-conduct be only available after it has been registered at the office of the Gardes du Commerce.

'Delivered at Versailles on the nineteenth of April, seventeen hundred and eighty-nine.

'LOUIS.

'*Laurent de Villedeuil.*'

The King signed the document and handed it to my grandfather, who took it and respectfully bent his knee. His liberty was protected by the man whose life he was soon to take.

As he retired, the Queen and Madame Elisabeth were announced, and swept past him. He was thus in presence on the same day of the three royal persons who subsequently fell under his knife.'

CHAPTER XXI.

ACTION AGAINST THE PRESS.

TOWARDS the end of the same year (1789) the question of penal reform was raised in the great National Assembly. In the month of October Doctor Guillotin, deputy of the *tiers-état* of Paris, presented a law by which capital punishment was to be inflicted in a uniform manner, without distinction of classes; and this new mode of punishment was decapitation, considered as the safest and most humane. This motion, which at first was adjourned, was presented again by Doctor Guillotin, and discussed on December 1. The first part of the proposed law was adopted with enthusiasm; but it went otherwise with decapitation, of which the definite sanction was put off for two years, because of the experiments made in view of finding the best means of inflicting it. I shall refer hereafter to this search, and relate how it ended by the selection of the instrument of execution now in use.

At length the Assembly completed the grand work which it had commenced, by the declaration of the rights of man; and this was for my grandfather an opportunity for a manifestation which I cannot pass without notice.

The reader doubtless remembers his defence in the extraordinary action brought against him by the Marchioness de X—— after their supper at a country inn. This defence showed that my grandfather possessed an appreciation of his office which habit and domestic education alone could explain. Cruel tests eventually modified these ideas; but, it must be admitted, Charles Henri Sanson was convinced of the legitimacy of his functions and of the injustice of the prejudice which cast discredit upon them. He therefore sought with characteristic energy and obstinacy all that could contribute to his rehabilitation.

The great movement of 1789, which removed so many injustices, appeared to him an auspicious time for the vindication of his rights; and just as, in 1776, he had taken advantage of the action brought against him by the Marchioness to claim the privilege of hereditary nobility, as first officer of a sovereign court, in the same way, when the National Assembly appointed the privileges of the citizens who were to enjoy political rights, he lost no time in asking for himself and his colleagues the title of active citizen.

In its sitting of December 24, 1789, the National Assembly passed a decree which, as far as civic capacity was concerned, principally aimed at the religious question, for it particularly stipulated, in favour of non-Catholics, for their right of election and also admission to all civil or military offices. The last article alone was broad; it set forth that no opposition could be allowed against the eligibility of any citizen unless the motive of exclusion were mentioned in constitutional decrees.

This was a *de facto* recognition of my grandfather's pretensions, for no constitutional decree deprived him of civil rights. We shall see in another chapter that my father was not satisfied and sought a more definite recognition of his claims.

But I have yet to relate a curious affair which took place a few days after the sitting of the Assembly I have just mentioned. My grandfather had let part of his house. Among his tenants was a man of the name of Rozé, a printer, who published various writings on the questions of the time. Public excitement was running high. Rozé belonged to the moderate party, who went no further than a constitutional monarchy, gradual reforms, and a progressive movement accomplished without violence. This was enough to expose him to the attacks of the demagogues. Rozé, who was very caustic, answered these onslaughts; and a polemic ensued which attracted general attention to the reactionary printer. A general cry of anger was raised against him in the press; but, curiously enough, the papers affected to speak of my grandfather as the owner of the printing establishment, and said little of Rozé. They doubtless wished, by such unfair aspersions, to discredit the claims he had shortly before advanced before the National Assembly. I cannot do better to explain the plot, for it was nothing less, than give a few extracts from the papers of the day.

'Revolutions of Paris,' by Prudhomme. No. 22, p. 27:

'It has just been discovered that the aristocrats have private presses. And where do you think they have es-

tablished them? At Sanson's—in the executioner's house. The district delegates of the Capucins of the Chaussée d'Antin have visited the premises and found the presses working for the aristocracy. You may judge, citizens, by the connection which exists between the aristocrats and honest M. Sanson of the advantage they would derive from his talents if they were the strongest.'

The presses had not been discovered in my grandfather's house, but in an adjoining building, belonging to the premises.

'Courrier de Paris,' by M. Gorsas, citizen of Paris:

'A great deal was said concerning the executioner of Paris in the last sittings of the National Assembly. While his eligibility was being discussed, he was seeking the means of becoming eligible. He had in his house the presses used to print all the abominable libels circulated in the provinces, to incite to rebellion and murder. It was in the ugly and dark Rue Saint-Jean, in the disgusting house of the executioner, that meetings of aristocrats took place; it was from this impure source that came all the incendiary writings circulated under the seal of the National Assembly. Who were the authors of these writings? We know not; but we repeat, they were circulated under the seal of the National Assembly.

'The presses have been taken away, and the honoured executioner has been arrested; he is now in the Prison de la Force. It is said, however, that he will get out of the scrape; he has powerful friends, who will prove that his arrest was a crime, with as much

eloquence as they proved to the Assembly that he is eligible.'

The 'Spy of Paris and of the Provinces,' or 'Most Secret News of the Day,' printed by Guillaume, junior:

'The executioner was interrogated yesterday. His answers are anything but satisfactory with regard to the serious conspiracy which was being arranged in his house. It was there that were held nocturnal meetings presided over by aristocrats, who were not ashamed to associate with the man who, sooner or later, must be compelled by his profession to wreak vengeance on their heads for the misfortunes they are preparing for the nation. It was in Sanson's house that were printed all the libels intended to incite the people to rebellion. This aristocratic agent maintains that his premises being too large, he had let a part of them; the aristocratic landlord did not know his tenants. The second answer is not so good as the first. Let us not lose courage; we shall hear of something more in a few days.'

'Assemblée Nationale,' sixty-first sitting, by M. de Beaulieu:

'It was in the executioner's house that were the presses that printed the atrocious libels circulated against the Assemblée. Secret meetings were also held, it is said, in this singular place of rendezvous.

'The executioner has been arrested and taken to the Châtelet; and this is his interrogatory, such as it has been forwarded to us:

'*Question*: "But why did you thus act, especially in the present circumstances?—Because I wished to give the

money earned with the presses to the poor.—*Q.*: Your generosities could not possibly have been greatly increased through any money derivable from the sale of the prints?—I never thought of making profit out of it.—*Q.*: But you were aware that was being done in your house against the public weal?—Not knowing what my tenants were about, I think I have compromised myself in no way.—*Q.*: Why did several persons run away when you were arrested?—I suppose they were the masters of those who were working.—*Q.*: Did you know them?—No.—*Q.*: You could not let your premises without knowing the names of your tenants."'

The 'Courrier de Paris,' or the 'Publiciste Français,' a political paper, *free and impartial*, with this motto, '*Nec lædere nec adulari*,' published by Descentis and a number of literary men, at the establishment of Madame Hérissaut:

No. 77: 'We hitherto distrusted the report that the conspirators assembled in the executioner's house, but we this moment hear that M. Sanson has been arrested and taken to the Châtelet, together with thirty persons concerned in the conspiracy.'

No. 81: 'We are assured that in several provincial towns a number of aristocrats, following the example of their accomplices of Paris, have chosen the executioner's abode as the place in which to meet together. . . . It is even said that some of the executioners who thus lent their houses have been arrested, together with some of the men who conspired with them, and are being brought to Paris.'

'Revolutions of France and Brabant,' by Camille Desmoulins, pp. 306 and 307:

"The great wits of the "green faction" have just published the prospectus of a lyric journal, in which they propose to turn into vaudevilles the decrees of the Assembly, &c. It is asserted that the journal in question is to be the amusing record of the songs sung some time ago by the aristocrats around the executioner's table. Either out of spite against the "Lanterne" and M. Guillotin, or because so many visits flattered him, M. Sanson fed his company very well.'

This last diatribe was the most dangerous of all, because it was based on a semblance of truth. It was, in fact, true that my grandfather, according to the traditional custom of our family, entertained many people at supper; but such gatherings had nothing to do with politics, and the aristocrats would not have honoured us with their presence. If Rozé had occasionally been invited, it was because he was our tenant. As to the so-called vaudevilles composed by the latter, Rozé did not write them against the Assembly, but in mockery of the violent measures which extreme parties were already proposing. Moreover Rozé was not the only man who used light poetry to turn public affairs and public men into ridicule. Doctor Guillotin's motion on the unity of capital punishments was laughed at in more than one song composed in his honour.

My grandfather could not, of course, allow such direct attacks to pass unchallenged. He therefore

resolved to refer all the libellous articles written against him to the police tribunal of the Hotel-de-Ville.

More fortunate than in 1776, he found an advocate who undertook to support his case. This advocate was a worthy man named Maton de la Varenne. He espoused the executioner's interests with much kindness, and henceforth he was a friend of the family. The case was called on January 16, 1790, but it was put off until the 27th of the same month.

All the delinquents appeared, with the exception of Gorsas. My grandfather had no difficulty in showing that he had never been arrested, and that the presses belonged to his tenant M. Rozé; and M. Maton de la Varenne proved that the writings of the latter contained nothing treasonable, since those which had been seized were returned to him on the following day with an authorisation to continue his publications. It may be interesting to the reader to see a few extracts of M. Maton's speech, which my grandfather caused to be printed at the time, and of which I have several copies in my possession. It is a curious sample of the somewhat emphatic eloquence of the time. These quotations, in any case, are better than my poor prose.

The following is the exordium of the plea:

'Gentlemen,—If the advocate, as the interpreter of the laws, were not passionless as the laws themselves; if prejudices, the monstrous offspring of misled imagination, could disarm his courage; if he only assisted men of rank; if he made any exception in the choice of his clients, you would not see me now before you, supporting

the plea of the executioner. But, gentlemen, what particularly honours our office is the protection which we accord to the weak, to the oppressed, to the widow and the orphan. Any consideration that could prevent us from doing our duty would be a crime. Unprecedented defamation, atrocious calumny, infamous libels—such are the weapons which a few audacious journalists have not been ashamed to use against the honest citizen on whose behalf I now appeal to your sense of justice.

'In the course of your sitting of the 16th of the present month, we had the honour to read to you the different libels by which my client is represented as one of the leaders of a body of aristocrats, and of infamous conspiracies tending to prevent the happy regeneration which is now in course of accomplishment. You have seen how his house was designated as the infamous refuge wherein the enemies of the nation assembled in order to plot against the country. You have had copies of interrogatories which never took place, and of the confessions he was falsely reported to have made. No doubt, gentlemen, you were filled with indignation when you perceived how malice could lead astray a number of writers whose talent might be useful to their fellow-countrymen if they used it to point out their privileges and rights, to enlighten the masses, to instruct kings and depositaries of authority. Be good enough to listen again to the reading of these licentious pamphlets; you will see that defamation and calumny could not go further, and you will feel how necessary it is to

promptly repress utterances which endanger the individual safety of my client.' (Here M. Maton de la Varenne read the articles, and resumed.) 'I ask you, gentlemen, and I ask MM. Prudhomme, Gorsas, De Beaulieu, Descentis, and Desmoulins, whether libel can pour out its poison with greater fury. When one reads such atrocities, one's blood kindles. Has not, after this, my client the right to demand redress? To question such a right, gentlemen, would be an impeachment of your sense of justice. "Calumny," says M. Dareau in his "Treatise on Insult," "is a poison so dangerous to society that it should never pass unpunished." The vilest crime is contained in calumny. An author celebrated for his talents and numerous misfortunes says that "defamation is to the mind what poisoning is to the body." "It is," he continues, "a kind of attack from which it is in some degree impossible to protect oneself. It is a thousand times easier to credit an assertion which destroys the honour of a citizen than to introduce a deadly substance into his body. The penalty should therefore be measured out by the difficulty which is found in protecting oneself. There are no antidotes against calumny, whereas the effects of poison may be met." Further, the same author expresses himself in these terms: "All that is not contradicted is accepted as true. The most revolting slander soon acquires the force of truth; a cry is soon raised which pronounces the condemnation of the unfortunate victim." The consequence of what I have just said, gentlemen, is that the law cannot be too severe against calumniators and libellers. Of all injuries that can be

inflicted upon a citizen, calumny is assuredly the most atrocious, since it springs from low and corrupt motives; and slander has before this met with condign punishment. Written, printed, and circulated defamation is far more deserving of punishment.'

Here the orator reviewed all the authorities in his favour, and recalled the Draconian edicts of 1626 and 1686, so rigorously carried out in the case of the unfortunate Larcher, and which provided that 'all those who circulated libels were subject to the penalty of death.' M. Maton de la Varenne came to the more recent laws on libel, and finished with the following words:

'The writings whereof my client complains are of a nature to destroy his honour. They have produced, and produce still, deep effects in the provinces and in Paris. Some say that, feeling that he could not show his innocence, he blew his brains out in prison, and others that he is soon to be hanged, and that his body is to be cut in several pieces, and nailed to the gates of the town; others, again, that he has been reprieved in consequence of the important information he has given concerning the enemies of the Revolution. He therefore has a clear right to an apology and to damages.

'You have heard, gentlemen, the chief reasons I have to urge in the present case. It is that of the public; it relates to the individuality of the citizen I now defend and to his family. What I demand on his behalf are *the rights of man.* You are too equitable not to compensate him for the injury he has received. However favourable your decision may be to him, it

cannot entirely dispel the prejudice which the calumnies I have spoken of have raised against him. If my client could repeat to you the sentiments he has expressed before me, if I were allowed to make here his profession of faith, to describe his patriotism, he would tell you, gentlemen, as he told me: "What have I done to those who insult me without justice or pity in the writings to which I am compelled to call your attention? What proof can they furnish of the atrocious imputations which they print against me? What interest have they in defaming an honest citizen, who is sufficiently unhappy at having to discharge functions against which his sentiments revolt? My dear citizens," my client would add, "is it just at the time when the country is coming to new life, when the odious prejudice which weighed upon me is passing away, when the nation is restoring to me my rights as man and citizen, that I could betray you? Far from taking part in plots, and participating in attempts, of which the mere idea fills me with horror, I call down shame and execration upon the perverse men who try to overthrow the superb edifice raised by the fathers of the country."'

All the defendants, with the exception of Gorsas, offered to retract their allegations. MM. Prudhomme, De Beaulieu, Descentis, and Camille Desmoulins were condemned to insert an apology in the earliest issue of their papers, and they were warned to be more prudent in the future. As to Gorsas, he was sentenced to a fine of one hundred livres. He appealed against the sentence, and this was an occasion for M. Maton de la

Varenne to make another speech, which I can quote *in extenso* :

'Gentlemen,—The equitable judgment you passed upon M. Gorsas led me to believe that he would rest satisfied, and thus make amends for an act which fully deserved your severity. It appears that our opinion of him was too favourable. M. Gorsas now appeals against your sentence. Does he, then, imagine that he can quietly libel honest men because he thinks they cannot defend themselves? Does he not know that all tribunals are open to all people without distinction, and that the authors of libels meet there with the punishment provided for the enemies of the public welfare? You have seen, gentlemen, in a paper called the "Courrier de Paris dans les Provinces," that M. Gorsas charges my client with having the presses "in which are printed all the abominable libels circulated in the provinces to excite to rebellion and murder." You have seen also that M. Gorsas announced the arrest and imprisonment of the citizen I defend. After circulating throughout Europe calumnies of such a nature against a man who is well known for his patriotism, M. Gorsas has the audacity to complain of the just sentence passed by you. By hoping to escape the punishment he so richly deserves, he insults your principles, your wisdom, and the law represented by you.

'Not only has M. Gorsas circulated false accusations against my client; he has also dared, since your sentence, to call him a bribed vagabond, and to express astonishment at an executioner being able to find advocates to

defend his cause. Does he, then, wish us to describe his private life? But, gentlemen, Sanson is too indulgent to follow such a course. Let Gorsas think of what he has done. Let him fear the moment when I may be compelled to make public certain acts of his. Let M. Gorsas know that one has no right to appear before a court of justice when one leads a doubtful life and professes anti-patriotic sentiments. As to the astonishment expressed by him at our having undertaken to defend M. Sanson, we have only to answer that all men are born equal in rights; that we regard as the noblest task that of defending the oppressed, whoever they may be, against the oppressor; and that we care little for what calumny and vengeance may be devised against us for doing our duty.

'In one of your preceding sittings we deplored the dangerous consequences of liberty of the press. How is it, gentlemen, that we are already obliged to regret a boon which removes the limits assigned by an odious despotism to human knowledge? Why has the finest prerogative of a free people become an instrument of calumny in the hands of a few men? Let M. Gorsas devote his talents to the defence, and not to the impeachment, of honourable men; let him enlighten opinions and principles, and we shall be the first to admire him. But, gentlemen, it is time that the scandal to which he has given rise in and out of town should be stopped; it is time for you to punish a fearful libel. My client trusts that you will confirm your first decision. I therefore persist in my conclusions.'

The judgment was, in fact, confirmed; but Gorsas, who had obtained some mitigation of his sentence by promising an immediate apology, behaved in the most disgraceful manner. In a preceding issue he had already made some poor jokes on the action in which he had thought fit not to appear. Under the heading of 'Anecdote,' he wrote:

'Yesterday a very singular case came before the Commune; it was a dispute between Sanson, *bourreau* of the town of Paris, and a number of literary men. We are told that one of the principal points of the action is that Sanson objects to the appellation of *bourreau*, because it is said in several decisions of the council that he is to be termed executioner of criminal sentences. The executioner demanded, among other things, that the word *bourreau* should be left out of the Dictionary of the Academy.

'There never was a better occasion for the application of the words: *Carnifex! quoque, nisi carnificis nomine, tu appellandus?*

'We are also assured that the executioner's counsel said that a *bourreau* could only throw light on his case with the lantern of the Rue de la Vannerie.'

It will be remarked that Gorsas did not inform his readers that he was one of the journalists he mentions, and that he deceived them as to the object of the action brought by my grandfather. But this was not all. Two days after his second condemnation, he made an ironical and malicious insinuation, in spite of his promises.

Speaking of the unhappy affairs of the Marquis de Favras, which had just been brought to light, he said :

'The hearing of the witnesses on behalf of the accused is still continued, and it is believed that the public prosecutor will be let off for his conclusions, M. le Marquis de Favras for a good fright, and "my co-citizen," Sanson, *bourreau* of Paris, for his hopes.'

If I have related at some length this dispute with the press, it is because much importance was attached to its result in my family, and I may add, in our corporation. Two of the writers who libelled my grandfather, Gorsas and Camille Desmoulins, soon afterwards met their former victim on the scaffold. Whether they remembered this dispute with my grandfather, and were again disposed to say, *Carnifex ! quoque, nisi carnificis nomine, tu appellandus ?* I cannot say ; but Gorsas was mistaken when, in the last paragraph I have quoted, he alluded to the unfortunate Favras. It is his execution which I now have to describe.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MARQUIS DE FAVRAS.

THREE great trials engrossed the public mind in 1790. They were those of Augeard, the farmer-general, charged with furnishing the Court with the funds with which the troops of the Champ de Mars had been bribed; of the Baron de Besenval, colonel-general of the Swiss Guards, who commanded at the Champ de Mars; and, lastly, of the Marquis de Favras, charged with having attempted to introduce into Paris a number of armed soldiers, with the object of getting rid of the chiefs of the principal administrations, of stealing the seals of the State, and of taking away the King and the royal family to Péronne.

MM. Augeard and De Besenval were acquitted; and this circumstance, which excited much irritation, rendered the position of the Marquis de Favras extremely perilous.

Thomas Mahy, Marquis de Favras, was born at Blois in 1745. He had two brothers, the Baron Mahy de Cormeré and M. de Chitenay. He entered the musketeers in 1760, took part in the campaign of 1761, and became lieutenant of the Swiss Guards of Monsieur,

brother of the King. He married in 1774, gave up his commission, and went to Vienna, where he obtained the recognition of his wife as the only and legitimate daughter of the prince of Anhalt-Schaunburg. Being of a very adventurous spirit, he went to Holland, and commanded a legion during the insurrection against the Statholder in 1787.

In 1789 he was a man of forty-five years of age, an excellent type of the accomplished gentilhomme, and full of enthusiasm and yearning for hazardous enterprises. After witnessing the revolutionary scene that took place at Versailles, he devised a plan for the liberation of the King; and he sought to carry it out with more zeal than prudence. If his plan was such as the spy Bertrand de Molleville reports in his memoirs, it was altogether impracticable. The main object of this plan was to assemble an army of 30,000 royalists, who were to be enrolled secretly. Such an enterprise demanded a great deal of money, and the greatest discretion. M. de Favras took much trouble to procure the funds, and communicated his plan to many persons, who, in return, bestowed on him more praise than money. Very soon, however, three recruits who were in his pay, Morel, Turcati, and Marquiès, denounced him, and in the night of December 25 the Marquis de Favras was arrested at his residence in the Place Royale, by order of the National Assembly.

On the following day an unknown hand denounced a far higher personage than the Marquis de Favras as the leader of the conspiracy. An anonymous paper was cir-

culated in Paris in which Monsieur, brother of the King, was mentioned as being the soul of the plot. This created such a sensation that the Comte de Provence deemed it prudent to contradict the report publicly. He appeared before the Commune and delivered a speech which was received with enthusiasm; but he could not and did not exonerate the Marquis de Favras, who was arraigned and took his trial on February 18, 1790.

As the prisoner was brought forward a few groans were uttered by the public; and, from the demeanour of the magistrates and the disposition of the public, M. de Favras no doubt foresaw that he was doomed. He nevertheless retained his presence of mind, and defended himself with much spirit. There can be no doubt that the Marquis did conspire, like most noblemen of the time; but proofs against him were utterly wanting, and the accused easily showed that sentence could not be passed upon him without a flagrant breach of justice. The judges, however, were in fear of their lives, and the indulgence they had shown to Besenval and Augeard was the cause of the pitiless treatment they inflicted upon Favras.

On February 29 the Châtelet passed sentence. The Marquis de Favras was condemned to be hanged, after amende honorable before the portico of Nôtre Dame. He betrayed no emotion; and when the president of the court told him that his sole hope was in the assistance of religion, he answered, 'Pardon me, sir; I have also the consolation which I find in my conscience.'

From the beginning of the sitting the Châtelet was

surrounded by an angry crowd which loudly called for the death of Favras. While the sentence was being read to the accused the executioner was directed to erect a gibbet on the Place de Grève. Favras therefore left the court only to be taken straight to the scaffold, and no one seemed conscious of the terrible precedent which was thus being established. So much hurry took place that as he was about to enter the cart my grandfather remembered that he had not executed the full prescription of the sentence, and he told M. de Favras that he must undress. The latter did not answer; but when his hands were untied, he helped the assistants to take off his clothes, and appeared in the cart in his shirt, and with naked feet.

Loud cries burst from the crowd. 'A rope around his neck!' was the universal demand. The prisoner made a sign to Charles Henri Sanson to obey, and did not even shudder when he felt the contact of the hemp which was to deprive him of life. He held a taper in his right hand. The cortége moved forward with the greatest difficulty through the dense masses. When it reached the *parvis* of Notre Dame the Marquis was made to kneel and pronounce the formula of amende honorable. M. de Favras took the paper from the hands of the clerk, and, after reading it in a loud and distinct voice, he added:

'Ready to appear before God, I forgive those who have accused me. I die innocent. The people clamour for my death. Since a victim is needed, it is better that I should die, instead of some other innocent man whose courage might fail him in the face of undeserved death.

I am about to suffer for crimes which I have not committed.'

When he returned to the cart his face was slightly pale, but he retained his fortitude to the last. In reaching the Place de Grève M. de Favras asked leave to write his will at the Hotel-de-Ville. This document was published a few days after his death. It denounced no one, but one of the phrases contained an awful accusation against a person described by historians as the Comte de Provence. The time had now come for the performance of the last act of the tragedy. It was dark, and, as the Grève was imperfectly lighted, lanterns had been provided on the scaffold. M. de Favras advanced with a firm step. The extraordinary courage he displayed touched some among the howling mob; but his enemies were in overwhelming numbers, and as he approached the ladder a man cried out:

'Allons, saute Marquis!'

M. de Favras took no notice of this supreme taunt; he ascended the ladder, and when he was high enough to be heard by the crowd, he said, raising his voice:

'Citizens, I die innocent. Pray for me!'

He repeated these words at every step, and when he reached the top of the ladder, looking up to the executioner's assistant, who was sitting astride on the arm of the gibbet, 'And you, do your duty,' he added.

These were his last words. They had scarcely passed his lips when his body was swinging in the air.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A PETITION TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

I NOW return to the vindication of the rights of citizen carried before the National Assembly by my grandfather. His petition was discussed, as I said before, in the sitting of December 23, 1789. The decision which was then given was, in my own estimation, quite satisfactory. But my grandfather was of a different opinion. It may be interesting to relate what took place in this first sitting before I allude to Charles Henri Sanson's attempt to obtain a national recognition of his rights.

Among the members who espoused the cause of the executioner was M. de Clermont-Tonnerre, who expressed himself in the following terms:

'Certain professions are bad or good. If they are bad, the country should suppress them; if they are good, they should be considered so. Among these professions there are two which I do not like to mention in a breath; but in the eyes of legislators, nothing but good and evil should be separated. I speak of public executioners and actors.

'I wish to say concerning the first of these two

professions that we have merely to react against prejudice. When a soldier is condemned to death, the hand which strikes him is not infamous. All that is ordered by the law is just. It orders the death of a criminal; the executioner obeys the law. It is absurd that the law should say to him, "Do this; and if you do it, you shall be covered with infamy."'

The Abbé Maury dissented from this view.

'The exclusion of executioners of justice is not founded on a prejudice,' he exclaimed. 'Every honest man shudders at the sight of the one who murders his fellow-creatures in cold blood. It is said that the law requires this action; but does the law order a man to be an executioner?'

A pale, sharp-featured orator ascended the tribune, and pronounced the following words:

'It can never be said in this Assembly that a necessary function of the law can be branded by the law. Such a law must be changed.'

The last speaker was Maximilien Robespierre. It is worth noting that neither of the two supporters of the executioner dared to defend him without accusing the law. The law and the office are, in fact, linked to each other, and it is impossible to denounce the one without branding the other. If the views of Robespierre and Clermont-Tonnerre had been adopted by the Assembly, it is probable that the bloody scenes of the Revolution would have been averted by the abolition of capital punishment. It is also curious to observe that this great question was brought before the National Assembly.

By a strange contrast which shows how sudden are the fluctuations of the human mind, the abolition of capital punishment had no more ardent advocates than Marat and Robespierre.

Charles Henri Sanson now presented a formal memorial to the Assembly; and it was through the medium of his former counsel, M. Maton de la Varenne, that he urged his plea, in the name of his brother Louis Cyr Charlemagne Sanson, executioner of the Prévoté de l'Hôtel, as well as on behalf of his provincial *confrères*. This memorial I cannot pass without quotation, inasmuch as it is altogether forgotten and obsolete. I do not share the opinions therein expressed, but it may give an idea of the view taken of their profession by former executioners:

'This is not a judicial memorial, but the grievance of a number of men branded with infamy, and who only live to suffer the humiliations, the shame, and the opprobrium deserved by crime only; this is the complaint of men, unhappily indispensable, who came to lament, before the fathers of the country, over the injustice of their co-citizens, and to claim the undeniable rights which nature and law had bestowed upon them; it is also a respectful remonstrance to the august Assembly of representatives of the nation, and a request for the proper interpretation of the decree of December 24 last.

'The question is not, as has been said by an obscure pamphleteer whose object it is to calumniate the members of the National Assembly, their decrees, and the

public, whether the executioners of criminal sentences shall sit beside the mayors, or shall have the rank of lieutenant-general of the national guard in the different towns of the kingdom. What should be ascertained is, whether the executioners are eligible, if they have the right to sit in assemblies; in short, if they are to enjoy the privileges of citizens. The question is not doubtful, except to weak men whose judgment is influenced by prejudice.

'Executioners are officially nominated to their functions; they hold their office from the hands of the king; their commissions, like those of officers, are only to be obtained on a favourable account of the candidates being presented and approved of.

'A few persons childishly believe that the commission of executioner is thrown at the candidate's feet; that it is gratuitously delivered; and that the executioner elect takes the oath on his knees. Hence they infer that his profession is infamous.

'No one will attempt to deny that this opinion springs from a popular mistake, when it is the fact that the executioner receives his commission from hand to hand; that the cost of purchase is considerable (the commission of executioner in Paris costs six thousand and forty-eight livres); that he takes the oath standing, like any other official; and that he is appointed on the advice of the public prosecutor.

'There is assuredly no difference between other commissions and that of the executioner so far as formalities of reception are concerned. The prejudice of which he

is a victim has been strengthened by dint of time, and he is regarded with contempt when it is too late for him to adopt another profession.

'Among the Israelites the plaintiff always carried out the judgment given in his favour. If a murderer was to be put to death, the family of the victim, young men chosen by the prince, and even the people vied for the honour of accomplishing the mission of executioner, because the avenger of a crime was regarded as a benefactor of society.

'To this custom, which cannot be styled barbarous without doing wrong to the humane and equitable people who retained it, another succeeded, which proves that the Ancients saw no dishonour in the act of putting a criminal to death. The judges themselves carried out their own sentences. The custom also was to allow accusers to carry out sentences passed on the accused. If this custom was abolished in the prosperous days of the Roman republic, it was because the executioner, impelled by feelings of revenge, abused his privilege.

'In Germany, before the creation of the office of executioner, the duty devolved on the youngest magistrate on the bench. In a few towns of the empire where this custom was not adopted, the last comer, the most recently married inhabitant, discharged the functions of executioner. These customs are transmitted to us by Adrian Beyer, of Frankfort, who informs us that in Germany the office of executioner of criminal justice is highly prized, that the emoluments are considerable, and that the holder is invested with titles.

'Even in France the functions of executioner have not at all times been regarded as degrading for whoever discharges them. Denisart, in his "Memento of Jurisprudence—V. Executioner," mentions an account furnished by the Land Administration in 1417, in which it is stated that forty-five sous *parisis* were paid to Étienne Lebré, styled *master of the high justice of the King our sire.*

'Let it not be imagined, however, that the executioners who indite the present petition wish to be considered as the equals of magistrates and as influential officials. They have no such pretension. But there is a vast difference between honouring the profession and discrediting it.

'What would society become, of what use would be judges, if an active and legitimate power did not carry out the judgments given in satisfaction of the outrages against citizens protected by the law? If the punishment of the culprit is a disgrace for him who inflicts it, the magistrates who have passed sentence, the clerk who has written the judgment, the public prosecutor, and the criminal lieutenant must also have their share of the disgrace. But these officers do not incur disgrace; far from this, they consider themselves honoured by their functions. Why, then, should the man who is the last participator in the infliction of punishment, who hates the crime he punishes, be disgraced by the discharge of functions that are the complement of those of a judge?

'A ruffian sets fire to a citizen's house, dips his hands

in his neighbour's or his father's blood, or conspires against his country; you are informed of his crimes, you demand his death, you go to see him die, and yet you will not recognise as a citizen, and you persist in considering as infamous, the official who inflicts upon the miscreant a punishment which you have called for! . . . Frenchmen, be just and logical! Confess that crime must remain unpunished, or that an executioner is needed to punish it. Confess that neither the magistrate nor the executioner, but the culprit alone, is guilty of violating the laws of nature; that without this just and legitimate crusade against crime society must be continually molested. Confess also that it has been unjust to extend shame attached to crime to the officer who punishes it.

'By what singular misapprehension, also, is the executioner of criminal judgments discredited, while in a regiment soldiers who inflict capital punishment are in no wise disgraced for so doing? Is not the case identical on both sides? Is not a culprit punished in both cases? It is a strange contradiction indeed to contest the citizenship of a man who carries out the sentences of civil tribunals, and to recognise as citizens those who carry out capital sentences passed by a council of war!

'Not only is it against the spirit of the law and reason to consider executioners as deserving of public execration; they cannot be denied the quality of citizen without also denying the least contestable social rights. Executioners pay, as the other subjects of the King, all public

and local taxes; they furnish the holy bread in their parishes, and they are registered as members of the national guard. Why should they be deprived of the advantages enjoyed by other citizens, since they are compelled to bear their share of the public expenditure? Fatal power of prejudice among a great, humane, and generous nation!

'The consequence of all that has just been stated for the information of the Assembly, is that it is unjust to contest the civil rights of the executioners; that they have a right to attend the meetings of citizens, and that they are eligible for situations such as they may be thought fit to hold. It only remains for us to see whether the decree of December 24, 1789, has admitted our claims and clearly decided that executioners are citizens.

'The first thought that occurs to prejudiced people after reading this decree is that it does not mention the case of executioners; that the settlement of the question raised as to the claims of their profession is avoided; that they remain under the stigma of prejudice; that the task of carrying out criminal judgments is regarded as infamous; and lastly, that after enacting that no other reasons for exclusion are maintainable against the eligibility of any citizen than those resulting from the constitutional decrees, the quality of citizens is not frankly conceded to executioners. As a consequence it is imagined that executioners are unfit for election and cannot occupy civil or military posts. This opinion, although it may perhaps be contrary to the spirit of the

law, is not devoid of reason; for, in order to fix irrevocably the fate of a number of men unjustly visited with public reprobation, the National Assembly might have decreed the eligibility *of every Frenchman* or naturalised Frenchman. This manner of expressing the spirit of the decree could not but have given full satisfaction to the executioners.

'A constitutional law should be clear and precise; it should be couched in clear language, and should only admit of one interpretation. The executioners are convinced that it was not the intention of the Assembly to deprive them of their rights as citizens. If they now ask for a definite interpretation of the law, it is because they are constantly told, throughout the kingdom, "that the National Assembly, when it decided on the advantages to be conceded to citizens, never intended to include them."

'It may be possible that executioners will not be appointed to public duties immediately after the interpretation they ask for; but it will at least remain decreed that they are citizens; they will be enabled to enter assemblies; the prejudice by which they are considered infamous will disappear by efflux of time, and society will no longer be deprived of their co-operation and patriotism, and of the example of their virtues.

'The petition of the executioners will doubtless appear ridiculous and preposterous to those who are governed by public opinion, and who cannot discard old customs and prejudices; but when the nation is recovering its freedom, when all privileges are being destroyed, when equity is becoming supreme, prejudices should be de-

nounced. They cannot be just, since they are in contradiction to the law; and why should the office of executioner be considered infamous by public opinion since the law does not regard it as such? Let men reform their customs; let them learn to think for themselves; and then the profession which has at all times wounded their sensibilities and appeared to them contrary to humanity will no longer seem to them to be degrading.

'How many, in a class of men now calumniated by the cowards who attack them because they think they are without friends—how many among these men have deserved the esteem and respect of their fellow-citizens! Not a few old men of the town of Rennes can still remember the virtue and kindness of Jacques Ganier, who died some thirty years ago, after discharging the functions of executioner during many years. He gave to the poor all that was not strictly necessary to himself. His death was to them a public calamity, and for a long time his grave was visited by grateful friends. The numerous services rendered by other executioners are well known. They gave, and give still, gratuitous assistance to citizens of all ranks, and their knowledge of chirurgery, medicine, and botany has been of invaluable use. Would it be just to exclude from society men who are often its benefactors?

'We now have to protest against the denomination of *bourreau* which is frequently given to executioners.[1] A

[1] The origin of the word *bourreau*, by which the executioner of high justice is frequently designated, is found in 1260. The name originated from a clerk named Borel, who obtained the fief of Bellemcombre on condition that

decree of the Parliament of Rouen, dated November 16, 1681, is couched in the following terms:

'"Persons are forbidden to call executioners *bourreau*, under penalty of a fine of fifty livres, twenty-five of which shall belong to the King, and the remainder to the executioner thus described."

'A decision given by the Parliament of Paris, in 1767, in favour of Joseph Doublot, executioner of Blois, forbids all persons to call the said Doublot *bourreau*, under penalty of a fine of 100 livres.

'Another decision of the Parliament of Rouen enacts the same penalty in favour of Ferey and Jouenne, executioners of Rouen, and adds that the latter shall be allowed, together with their families, to enter places of recreation and amusement.

'These decisions were confirmed by the King in 1787. The Assembly should follow the example.

'Having demonstrated the legitimacy of their profession and the injustice of the denomination under which they are commonly designated, the executioners ask the representatives of the nation: 1. To add the following clause to the third part of their decree of December 24, 1789: "Decrees also that no other reasons

he should hang the thieves of the district. But as he was a priest, and as the Church 'mentioned in its prayers that it did not like blood,' he paid a layman to discharge his functions. The King furnished him with provisions throughout the year in consequence of his function, which he was supposed to discharge himself. It became the custom to call Richard Borel *le Borel*, and to describe as *Boreaux* all those who put criminals to death. The orthography of the name was altered and became *bourreau* or *bourreaux*. The denomination was not then intended as an insult, but it bore a contemptuous signification in the 16th century.—*Note of the Memorial.*

of exclusion than those contained in constitutional decrees can be used against the eligibility of any Frenchman," unless the Assembly should prefer to declare that it considers executioners as citizens; 2. To order the enforcement of the foregoing decisions regarding the use of the word *bourreau*; and to add such penalties as the Assembly may think proper. By so doing the Legislature will restore to society a number of men who have never been unworthy of public consideration.

'*Signed*, C. H. SANSON.

'L. C. C. SANSON.

'Acting on behalf of all their colleagues throughout the kingdom.

'MATON DE LA VARENNE,
Barrister.'

Strange to say, this petition found many apologists in the press. The 'Fidèle Observateur,' the 'Journal Général de la Police et des Tribunaux,' and Marat's paper, 'L'Ami du Peuple,' took up the cause of executioners. The Assembly, however, did not come to a decision with regard to their claim. Charles Henri Sanson was fain to content himself with the original form of the decree, which, in my opinion, was sufficiently satisfactory. In the sitting of December 24, Robespierre had said very judiciously: 'I do not think a special law is necessary; those who are not excluded are admitted.' Besides, the time was drawing near when the rehabilitation sought by my grandfather and his colleagues was to become a

kind of apotheosis, and to surpass all their most sanguine expectations. Charles Henri Sanson was about to receive official congratulations, popular ovations—and, in fact, to become one of the essential functionaries of the State.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE GUILLOTINE.

DOCTOR GUILLOTIN pursued with much perseverance the task he had undertaken to accomplish. After obtaining the sanction of the Assembly for his motion demanding equality of punishment in cases of capital sentences, he again drew attention to those of his other motions which had been adjourned. These were, it may be remembered, to the effect that crime should be considered as wholly personal; that the disgrace of punishment should not extend to the families of culprits; that confiscation should be abolished; that the bodies of executed criminals should be delivered to their relations if asked for; and, if not, that they should be buried without any mention on the register of the kind of death they had suffered.

All these reforms were favourably regarded by the Assembly. But Guillotin's special object was to obtain the adoption of another innovation. Disgusted as he was at the sight of the gibbet, which exhibited a corpse for hours before the mob, he determined to substitute for all former modes a punishment by which suffering would be mitigated. He saw no better means for the

furtherance of his object than decapitation. It had hitherto been reserved for a privileged class, and, in all respects, it was a more manly and natural way of inflicting death. But then the executioner's sword had often failed to accomplish its work; the hand was apt to tremble, and machinery only could give a guarantee of unswerving precision. Guillotin's purpose was, then, to discover the best decapitating machine; and although the search he undertook was novel work for a man who had hitherto endeavoured to save life rather than to devise means of destroying it, he pursued it with untiring zeal. In order to gain time, he merely suggested the recognition of his principle in the following article:

'In every case of capital punishment the mode of execution shall be the same. The criminal shall be decapitated by means of a mechanical contrivance.'

This proposal was made exactly three years before the 'mechanical contrivance' received the baptism of royal blood. It was sent to the Committee of Seven, and only became law in 1791, when decapitation was definitively adopted; but the process by which decapitation was to take place was not indicated. This omission caused much alarm to my grandfather; for he foresaw that, unless mechanical means were devised, the heaviest responsibility would rest with him. He sent a memorial to the minister of justice, in which he enumerated the difficulties of decapitation with the sword, the necessity of firmness and courage not to be found in every culprit, and the impossibility of numerous executions, in consequence of the bluntness of swords frequently used.

'There can be no doubt,' he said, in his expostulation, 'that when I shall have to deal consecutively with several criminals, the terror excited by the sight of blood must lead to deplorable consequences. The other culprits must lose the firmness which is absolutely needed in such executions.' Charles Henri Sanson ended by insisting on the urgent necessity of a machine which would keep the sufferer's body in a horizontal position, and ensure prompter and safer operation than could be expected of hand-work.

This was precisely what Dr. Guillotin was seeking, and he visited my grandfather to ask his advice. But their long conversations led to no satisfactory results. They examined in vain everything which, in the past and in other countries, could realise the idea of the machine. Three German engravings by Pontz, Aldegreder, and Lucus von Cranach, and an Italian picture dated 1555, furnished a few models, but none was perfect. The Italian engraving represented an instrument of execution called the Mannaïa, which had sometimes been used in Italy, particularly in Genoa, at the time of the execution of Giustiniani the famous conspirator. The apparatus was erected upon a scaffold; the axe was placed between two perpendicular slip boards: the culprit was kneeling, with his head on a block, and the executioner was holding a rope which prevented the axe from falling. The German engravings were almost identical with this.

Minute information was also collected concerning divers punishments inflicted in Persia, and later in

Scotland; but these were inferior varieties of the Mannaïa. Decapitation by machinery had even taken place in France, Marshal de Montmorency having been executed at Toulouse, in 1631, by means of a sliding axe.

Nothing better than this last process could be discovered, and it would most likely have been adopted had not my grandfather persistently objected that the attitude of the culprit was a point of great importance, which could not be overlooked. It was almost as difficult, he said, for a fainting man to remain on his knees as to stand on his feet. Hanging him, or tying him on the wheel, was possible; but it was hopeless to expect that he would, except in rare cases, remain motionless while the death-blow was being inflicted.

By a fortunate chance, Charles Henri Sanson had become acquainted with a German engineer of the name of Schmidt. This man was a manufacturer of musical instruments; he was very ingenious in his craft, and was a passionate lover of music. He had sold some instruments to my grandfather; and, as the latter himself played the violin, Schmidt frequently joined him in a duet, Charles Henri playing the violin and the German playing the clavecin.[1] One evening, after playing an air of *Iphigénie en Aulide*, Charles Henri spoke to his companion of his perplexity. Schmidt hesitated for a moment, and then traced a few rapid lines on a piece of paper, which he handed to my grandfather. *It was the guillotine.*

Charles Henri Sanson looked at the drawing with

[1] A primitive form of the piano.

unfeigned surprise and satisfaction. Schmidt told him that he had long doubted whether it was proper for him to have anything to do with instruments which were designed to kill, but that, seeing his friend's perplexity, he could not resist the temptation of assisting him.

It was thus that the guillotine came into the world, as it were, in the midst of a concert.

Charles Henri Sanson informed Guillotin of the discovery. The doctor was beside himself with joy, for he had pursued his hobby with extraordinary vigour and enthusiasm. Certain biographers have erroneously asserted that Guillotin regretted his action in the matter, and doubted the reality of the service he had rendered to the country. Up to the last moment of his life Guillotin remained convinced that he had accomplished a duty, and had initiated a great reform. If the people gave the name of guillotine to the new instrument of execution—although, I need hardly repeat, the doctor was not the real inventor of it—it was simply an act of justice; for it was owing to his efforts that decapitation and the machine used for its infliction were adopted.

He described the new apparatus in the sitting of April 31, 1791. Carried away by enthusiasm, he made use of expressions which excited loud laughter, and almost imperilled the success of his cause. He said that the culprit would only feel *à slight freshness on the neck.* The phrase was sufficiently ingenious; but when he added, '*With this machine I chop your head off in a twinkling, and you do not suffer,*' the Assembly gave

way to irrepressible laughter. Howbeit, the legislators determined to abide by their first decision. A long correspondence took place between Guillotin, M. Roederer, procureur-general of the Commune, and my grandfather. The Assembly at length appointed Dr. Antoine Louis to enquire into the new mode of decapitation.

Louis was the King's physician, and his royal patron heard of the mission he had to discharge. The dexterity of this prince as a locksmith is well known. He wished to assist Louis, and to give his personal attention to a matter in which, he said, he was interested as a sovereign. The King and his physician expressed a desire to examine the plan of the machine proposed by Guillotin. The latter was therefore requested by Dr. Louis to come to the Tuileries, and he was told to bring my grandfather with him.

They found Dr. Louis in his closet. After a few polite words had been exchanged by the two physicians, Guillotin showed Louis the plan of the machine drawn by Schmidt, to which my grandfather had added a few explanations. While Louis was examining it with great attention, a door was opened, and a new comer appeared in the closet. Dr. Louis, who was seated, immediately rose. The stranger looked coldly at Dr. Guillotin, who bowed; and abruptly addressing Louis, he said to him:

'Well, doctor, what do you think of it?'

'It seems to me perfect,' answered the doctor; 'and fully justifies what M. Guillotin told me. You can

judge for yourself.' And he handed the plan to the last comer, who looked at it, and then shook his head doubtfully.

'The knife has the shape of a crescent. Do you think a knife thus shaped would be suitable for all necks? There are some which it certainly could not cut.'

Since the speaker's entrance, Charles Henri Sanson had lost neither one of his words nor one of his gestures. The sound of the voice showed him that his first impression was a true one; the King was again before him; but, by the plain costume he wore, it was easy to see that he wished to remain incognito. Charles Henri was struck by his remark, and looking at the King's neck, he saw that its proportions were just those which justified the royal remark. The King again spoke, and he asked in a low voice, 'Is this the *man?*'

Doctor Louis answered in the affirmative.

'Ask him what he thinks of the matter.'

'You heard this gentleman's observation,' said Louis; 'what is your opinion with regard to the shape of the knife?'

'The gentleman is quite right,' answered my grandfather; 'the knife is not what it should be.'

The King smiled with an air of satisfaction, and taking a pen which lay on the table, he rectified the plan, and substituted an oblique line for the crescent.

'I may be mistaken, after all,' he added; 'the two shapes should be tried when the experiments are made.'

He then rose and retired, waving his hand. Such

was the King's second interview with my grandfather. Their next official meeting was to take place on January 21 of the following year.

Five days after this conference, that is on March 7, Antoine Louis presented his report to the Assembly, in which he proposed the pure and simple adoption of the machine, such as it had been sketched by Schmidt, with the alternative of one or the other knife. On March 20 the Assembly passed the report, and Dr. Louis was requested to superintend the construction of the first decapitating machine. The work was done by a carpenter named Guidon, who charged 5,500 francs for it. When the guillotine was finished my grandfather and two of his brothers went to the prison of Bicêtre to make experiments on three corpses. This took place on April 17, 1792, in the courtyard of the prison, in the presence of Drs. Antoine Louis, Phillippe Pinel, and Cabanis. The prisoners eagerly looked on from the windows.

The three corpses were decapitated, one after the other. The first two experiments with the oblique knife succeeded; the third, with the knife shaped as a crescent, failed. The oblique knife was therefore adopted.

A week afterwards my grandfather had occasion to test the new system on a man named Pelletin, sentenced to death for theft and an attempted murder. Some uneasiness was felt with regard to the behaviour of the mob at the sight of the new instrument of death, as the following letter, addressed by Roederer to La Fayette, sufficiently shows:—

'Paris, April 25, 1792.

'Sir,—The new mode of decapitation must certainly attract a considerable number of spectators to the Grève, and it is necessary to take special measures to prevent any attempt to destroy the machine. I therefore think it indispensable that you should order the gendarmes who are to attend the execution to remain until the machine is taken away.'

The last episode of the history of the wheel may be remembered. Some such event, it was feared, might inaugurate the history of the instrument which some already called *louison* or *louisette*, from the name of Dr. Louis, and others *guillotine*, from the name of Dr. Guillotin. The last name prevailed; but no disorder occurred. The execution took place, and fully justified my grandfather's anticipations. Pelletin was carried to the scaffold in a fainting fit, and it would have been impossible to decapitate him with the sword. The execution was a complete success.

It might now be interesting to enquire whether the guillotine is really the least cruel mode of punishment, and if, therefore, it answered the humane views of its inventors; or if, as some anatomists have asserted, decapitation is followed by horrible, and in some way posthumous, sufferings. I would rather adjourn the examination of this important question until the time when I can relate my personal recollections, and give the observations I was enabled to make in the course of my professional career. We are now close upon portentous events, the relation of which must not be deferred.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE TRIBUNAL OF AUGUST 17, 1792.

THE hour is now at hand when the history of the scaffold and the history of France are to be blended into one. In a few days the despised headsman shall become the key of the vault of the social edifice which is being constructed. Until then he could answer to those who saluted him with the insulting epithet of *bourreau*, 'Why do you despise me if you do not despise your laws?' The excitement of a nation now gives him the right to exclaim: 'It seems as if you had made a revolution only to give me work!'

The grandson of the Sanson of 1793—of the *great* Sanson, as he was called—might perhaps discard for a moment the humility which he has hitherto displayed; but let the reader be reassured. In pursuing the course of my narrative, I shall not trouble him with my personal opinions. I propose to be sparing of all observations concerning politics, and to relate as briefly as possible the events I am about to record. I will soon give up the pen to Charles Henri Sanson, my grandfather, and quote his diary exactly as he wrote it. This record begins at the end of the month of May,

some six weeks after the erection of the revolutionary tribunal, and is continued to the month of Vendémiaire of the year III. Written as it is, *currente calamo*, it is the most accurate diary of the scaffold which, I believe, can be found.

But nine months still separate us from the day when Charles Henri Sanson began to work in earnest; and during this lapse of time the guillotine was not altogether inactive. The Assembly had disappeared, and the King was abandoned to his own inspirations. On August 20, 1792, the Tuileries was invaded, and the King was made prisoner and incarcerated in the Temple. A revolutionary tribunal was instituted. This tribunal, although it numbered men like Fouquier-Tinville, used the guillotine with comparative moderation. It applied severe laws with severity; but it acted with justice, and respected the forms of law. It had chiefly to deal with common malefactors. From 1771 to 1792 the number of raids on persons and property considerably increased. Paper money, which was of recent creation, excited the cupidity of forgers. During a period of seven months, fifteen forgers were executed on the Place de Grève. On August 19, 1792, one Collot was condemned to death for forgery, and the guillotine was erected on the usual spot selected for executions. The Place de Grève was, as usual, well attended. As the cart, in which were Charles Henri Sanson and the culprit, drove up, a tremendous clamour greeted their appearance, and my grandfather distinguished a cry of 'To the Carrousel!'

The horse continued to advance; but a man seized the bridle and asked the driver why he did not obey the popular order. Charles Henri Sanson interposed; but the man declared that the will of the Commune was that the guillotine should henceforth be erected opposite the palace of the last King, and that he must immediately transfer his *tools* there.

My grandfather replied that his duty was to carry out the orders which were transmitted to him, and not to meet the wishes of the magistrates before they were expressed. But the clamour became more vociferous, and the horse's head was turned in the direction of the Tuileries. Charles Henri Sanson's position was very perplexing. He asked, and at length obtained, leave to drive up to the Hôtel-de-Ville to ask for instructions.

After some hesitation the Procureur of the Commune authorised my grandfather to act according to the wishes of the mob. The scaffold was taken down and transferred to the Place du Carrousel; and the cart repaired thither, escorted by the crowd.

But a considerable time elapsed before the guillotine could be erected again; and the culprit, who had hitherto been calm, began to struggle violently. As the carpenters had gone away, the people helped my grandfather to reconstruct the instrument of death. This reconstruction, however, progressed so slowly that night came on before it was finished, and my grandfather, apprehending desperate resistance on the part of the doomed man, requested some of those who worked around him to go to the Commune and ask for an

adjournment of the execution. The request was received with jeers of anger and derision, and public irritation became ominously threatening. A beardless young man, who wore the red cap, came forward, shrieking that my grandfather was a traitor, and that he should taste of the guillotine himself unless he 'operated' without more ado.

Charles Henri retorted with some warmth that he could not execute the culprit without special assistance.

'Your assistants are drunk!' exclaimed the young man. 'You can find as much help as you require here. The blood of aristocrats cements the happiness of the nation, and there is not one man in the crowd who is not ready to lend you a hand.'

A general cry of assent followed these words; but the circle around the scaffold became wider, and it appeared obvious that few were prepared to stand by their word. My grandfather perceived this, and hastened to prevent the first speaker from retreating by accepting his offer.

The culprit was led to the steps of the scaffold, which he refused to mount, and Charles Henri was obliged to take him in his arms and carry him up to the platform. When the unfortunate man saw the dark outline of the machine, his resistance became more desperate, and he shrieked for mercy. The crowd was now silent. The improvised executioner did not budge, but he was very pale. At last, after a final struggle, the culprit was strapped to the plank, but his contor-

tions were so violent that an assistant had to sit upon him.

Charles Henri Sanson now told the young man that he could not furnish a better proof of his patriotism than by taking a leading part in the execution; and he put in his hand the rope which communicated with the knife. At his bidding the young man gave a tug; the knife fell, and the head rolled in the basket.

This was not all; it was customary to show the head to the multitude after decapitation, and loud cries reminded my grandfather of the custom. He explained to the young man what he was to do, at the same time proposing himself to do the horrible duty. But his substitute refused; he took the head by the hair, and advanced to the edge of the scaffold; but as he was raising his arm to show the bloody trophy, he staggered and fell back. Charles Henri Sanson came to his assistance, thinking that he was fainting; but he discovered that he was dead. Violent emotion had brought on an apoplectic fit, which killed him instantaneously.

Such was the first execution that took place on the Place du Carrousel. Henceforth this place was the scene of every execution.

Defence, in those stormy times, was not less violent than attack. Royalist writers were as bitter as their adversaries of the patriotic party. Two journalists, Suleau and Durosoy, became especially conspicuous for the vehemence of their writings. The former was a man of action as well as a writer, and he had fought on

behalf of royalty on August 10. He was identified in the street by Théroigne de Méricourt, and at the instigation of that sanguinary amazon he was massacred by the mob. Durosoy's end was not less tragic. He was executed, and died with the greatest firmness. An officer named Collinot d'Augremont was his successor on the guillotine.

On August 29 Laporte, superintendent of the civil list, paid for the prodigalities of his royal master. Laporte was a venerable old man, and his death caused profound emotion among those who witnessed it. On the 31st Sellier and Desperriers were sentenced to death for issuing forged assignats, and beheaded on the same day.

The pillory had not followed the scaffold to the Place du Carrousel; it remained on the Grève. On September 1 my grandfather had to deal with one Jean Julien, sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment and to public exposure in the pillory, who excitedly protested that he was innocent. Hardly was he chained to the pillory than he exclaimed, '*Vive le Roi! Vive la Reine!*' These words produced the greatest excitement, and Julien would certainly have been massacred but for the prompt interference of the police. He was taken before the revoluntionary tribunal, sentenced to death, and executed on the following day.

No execution took place on September 3.

En revanche, there was a wholesale massacre, which it is not my business to speak of. While the massacre was taking place, the revolutionary tribunal was trying

Major Bachmann, a Swiss officer. The howls of the victims and the cries of the slaughterers could be heard, and frequently disturbed the audience. When the President passed sentence, Major Bachmann ran to join his friends who were being killed; but he was held back and reserved for the scaffold, on which he suffered the next day.

Old Cazotte, who, thanks to his daughter's devotion, had found mercy before the mock tribunal instituted at l'Abbaye, was less fortunate with the judges appointed by law. Cazotte was a graceful poet, whose mysticism sometimes verged on prophecy. One evening, in the Marchioness de Vaudreuil's drawing-room, he was seized with one of his habitual fits of sadness. When enquiries were made concerning his state of mind, he said that although he was awake he could see, as in a dream, things which filled him with terror; he spoke of prisons and executioners' carts, and he described the instrument of death which was to be invented twenty years afterwards. He added that he could see most of those who were present perishing by the executioner's hand.

A moment of silence followed this strange prediction; it was broken by Madame de Montmorency, who said laughing:

'You spoke of carts, my dear Monsieur Cazotte; let me hope that I shall be allowed to go to the scaffold in my own carriage.'

'Not so, Madame,' answered the visionnaire, 'for it shall be the last privilege accorded to the King of

France. You will be taken to the scaffold in a cart just like myself.'

Cazotte's singular vision was fully realised. He was arrested on August 25, sentenced to death and executed.

Executions were numerous up to the time of the King's death; but the number was considerably greater afterwards. The emigrants who fought in the ranks of the Prussian army, and were captured on the battle-field, suffered on the scaffold, together with a large party of ordinary miscreants, whose names it is not necessary to mention here.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DEATH OF LOUIS XVI.

THE King's death was the first signal for the struggle between the two factions which predominated in the Convention. The Gironde objected to the death of Louis XVI.; but the influence of the Montagne prevailed, and the monarch's appearance on the scaffold was the prelude to a series of wholesale executions. The people, too, was so infuriated that it frequently took the law into its own hands. Heads carried on pikes were often seen in the streets. Was the people, properly so called, wholly responsible for this cruelty? My grandfather was wont to tell us that he had often recognised gaol birds among the individuals who incited to murder, and he had no doubt that most of the outrages so frequently perpetrated were committed at the instigation of those ruffians.

Charles Henri Sanson was then living with his son (my father), who was twenty-seven years of age; and his style of life was so quiet and secluded that on August 10 he was not even aware that the Tuileries had been attacked and devastated by the people. On that day my father went to breakfast with his uncle, Louis Cyr

Charlemagne Sanson. I cannot do better than allow him to describe what occurred on the occasion.

'After breakfast,' he writes, 'I had opened the window to air the room. I looked out and saw a crowd in the street, but, as the apartment was on the fourth floor, I could not see distinctly what was taking place. However, I espied a young fellow who was raising in the air something stuck on a pole. My aunt, who was also looking out, hastily retreated, exclaiming:

'"Good heavens, it is a head!"

'This exclamation filled us with fear, and we felt the more anxious to know what had happened. But before we could get any information a larger crowd rushed down the street in pursuit of a young man, who, as we perceived, was a Swiss guard of the Poissonnière barracks.

'The fugitive had a good start, and was anxiously looking about for a means of escape. I confess that both myself and my uncle were rather rash; but we could not resist our first impulse of compassion. I told my uncle that we could not allow a man to be massacred before our very door; and, in spite of the advice of those who had breakfasted with us, we hastily went down and opened the door.

'"What do you want to do with this young man?" said I to some of those who gave chase.

'"But, sir," answered one, "the Swiss guards are being killed."

'"For what reason?"

'"Why, don't you know?"

'"All I know is that this man has done you no harm, and that you want to murder him."

'While we were thus parleying, the Switzer had retreated behind us. Two men tried to seize him, but I held them back; my uncle pushed the fugitive into the hall, and I was enabled to shut the door in the faces of the pursuers.

'The house was situate in the Rue Beauregard, and communicated with a butcher's shop in the Rue de Cléry. We escaped through these premises, and at the soldier's request we took him to the guard-house of the Bonne-Nouvelle section, which was then the Rue de Bourbon-Villeneuve, near the Cour des Miracles. We then returned home, escorted by twelve armed men, who easily dispersed the crowd which had gathered before our house. It was from our escort that we heard of the events which had taken place at the Tuileries on the same morning.

'The day which had so tragically begun, ended with an amusing incident. On our return, we found one of our relatives, who had just come from the country to pass a few days in Paris. The poor man was so frightened that he wanted to leave Paris without delay. But when he tried to depart, he found that the gates of the town had just been closed, and that no one could leave Paris without submitting to certain formalities, which increased our visitor's apprehensions. He gave way to the most ludicrous despair, tore his hair, cursed his own imprudence, and could only be appeased by my promising to provide for him a means of escape far more dangerous than

the formalities after which he might have quietly left Paris.

'I was acquainted with one of my grandfather Jugier's old friends, who had a garden which extended beyond the precincts of the town. Our timorous friend effected his escape by this opening, previously taking care to disguise himself as a gardener.

'Up to this time neither I nor my father had attended very regularly the meetings of our section, and we had not been incorporated in the National Guard; but on the following day (August 11) two delegates of the section came to invite us to attend, and we were compelled to obey. One of these delegates was an old schoolfellow of mine, who had hitherto been in ignorance of my origin, and I was in fear that he would discard me. Far from doing so, however, he strove to convince me that he did not share the common prejudice with regard to my family.

'This first meeting of the Assembly was not marked by any interesting event; but on the following day a deputation of twelve members, of which I was one, was appointed to protest against the intrusion of an individual who had obtained the suffrages of the inhabitants of the district as member of the Commune by deceiving them.

'We went to the Hôtel-de-Ville, where the Commune was sitting, and the president of our deputation, a barrister of the name of Jacob, handed to the secretary a copy of the resolution of our section, which explained the object of our visit. When his turn came to support

this resolution, he was interrupted by Chaumette, who said that he as well as Robespierre knew the individual alluded to, that they had seen him enter the carriage in which the King, the Queen, and the royal family had been taken to the Temple prison, and that this was a sufficient proof of patriotism. Chaumette was not content with impeaching us; he also spoke of our section as a centre of aristocracy, and he described our deputation as a shameful cabal against a virtuous citizen.

'While this discussion was going on I was placed in a dangerous predicament. Being unable to find room in the hall with my colleagues, I sat down near strangers, among whom were some of the professional slaughterers who were constantly in quest of victims. Chaumette had hardly finished when Robespierre called an usher and said to him:

'"Tell the President that I wish to speak."

'At the same moment, as I did not appear to belong to the deputation, several sinister-looking men eyed me, and one of them said:

'"What are you doing here? I suppose you are one of the aristocrats? We'll just 'do' for you as we did for the Swiss soldiers."

'These threatening words frightened me, and I confess that I could not refrain from showing it. I nevertheless answered as firmly as I could:

'"Citizens, you have a curious way of settling questions. You had better learn who I am before you try to murder me."

'"Bah!" exclaimed another man; "we should never get rid of these ruffianly aristocrats if we listened to what they say."

'I looked around, sadly perplexed, and was fortunate enough to catch the eye of the schoolfellow I have already spoken of. He perceived my position, and, coming up to me, he said that I was wanted by the secretary of the Commune. We were allowed to go away; I re-entered the hall by another door, and joined my colleagues, whose fate, whatever it might be, it was my duty to share.

'Robespierre was speaking when I entered. He entirely concurred with Chaumette, so that he seemed to grant us our lives when we were ignominiously dismissed; and we had the greatest difficulty in finding the staircase amidst the people who crowded to look at us.

'When we emerged from the Hôtel-de-Ville we could no longer restrain our indignation at the shameful manner in which we had been treated, and we resolved to go immediately to our section, to report upon what had occurred. The section was sitting when we arrived; and hardly had our president described the result of our mission than the meeting rose *en masse* asking for revenge. It was immediately agreed that the section should be called to arms, and every one prepared for the emergency.

'We had four pieces of cannon. Our artillerymen brought them out, and in less than two hours over two thousand men were ready to attack the Commune,

to ask for redress for the insult inflicted on the delegates of the section. Every man was at his post; the artillery came first, and the soldiers and officers after; and we were about to march forward when four citizens, sent by the Commune to apologise for what had occurred, appeared. We listened to them at first with some attention; but one of the speakers having expressed himself in somewhat haughty terms, our president interrupted him, and spoke severely of the treatment our deputation had received, and of the danger to which they had thereby been exposed. The delegates were silent; they at length asked to be allowed to report to the Commune what they had heard and seen. This was agreed to; but it was stipulated that Chaumette and Robespierre should publicly retract, on the very next day, and in the presence of the deputation, the insulting assertions they had made. The delegates promised that it should be so, and retired.

'The promise was discharged on the following day. Our deputation returned to the Hôtel-de-Ville, and, in the presence of nearly twelve hundred persons of all classes, Robespierre, Chaumette, and the President of the Commune admitted that they had been deceived with regard to the inhabitants of the section of the Northern Suburb; that they had since ascertained that they were excellent patriots. A copy of the report of the sitting was at once delivered to us, and we peacefully returned to our section, which was awaiting in arms the result of this second expedition.'

I have thought proper to quote the above incidents

just as my father related them in order to show what the situation of Paris was when the sentence on the unfortunate Louis XVI. was pronounced. It would have been impossible to find anywhere else a more complete state of anarchy; for what condition could be worse than that of a city in which civil war was so imminent between two districts armed with musket and cannon?

When the election of officers took place, my father and my grandfather were elected sergeants, and my grand-uncle, Charlemagne Sanson, corporal. This obliged them to take a more active part than they might have wished in the political manifestations which took place during this strange epoch. A short time had elapsed since these grades had been conferred upon them when the Convention began to consider the fate of the royal prisoner of the Temple. This bloody page of our history has been so often expatiated upon that it needs no repetition. It is only the last act of the drama which I have to relate, and I feel the task is sufficiently heavy.[1]

It was on December 11, 1792, that the monarch appeared before the Convention, then presided over by Barrère, whose cold and trenchant eloquence was to exercise a decisive influence on the final vote. Sentence was passed on January 17. The surprise caused by the result was so great that the votes were counted a second time; but on the following day it was ascertained beyond doubt that the sentence passed upon Louis Capet was death.

[1] The translator has suppressed here, as elsewhere, a great deal of irrelevant matter.

My grandfather heard the news on the 19th. On the 20th he was to celebrate the twenty-ninth anniversary of his marriage. The celebration was a mournful one. In the evening Charles Henri and his son went out. They learned that the King had asked for a delay of three days to prepare himself for death, and that the petition had been refused; and Charles Henri, having gone as far as the legislative palace, was positively assured that the only favour granted to the King of France was a final meeting with his family and the assistance of a priest of his religion. It was therefore certain that the execution had been appointed for the following day.

My grandfather returned home in a melancholy mood. He found an order, which had been sent to him, to erect a scaffold and to expect the convict at eight o'clock in the morning. Other papers brought during his absence were letters by which he was apprised that measures were taken to save the King during his progress from the Temple to the Place de la Révolution, and that, if my grandfather offered the slightest resistance, he would be killed. Other letters begged and did not threaten. He was asked to join the saviours of the victim, and to delay the execution as much as possible so as to give time for a number of resolute men to break through the ranks of the militia and carry off the King.

This last means, which my grandfather regarded as neither impossible nor unlikely, was the only one which left him a ray of hope.

On the following day, at dawn, my grandfather and my father were roused by the sound of the drums which were calling out the section, each district having to furnish a battalion for the execution. My father belonged to the battalion selected in our neighbourhood for the unpleasant duty. He was not sorry for it, because it enabled him to share with his father the perils of the day. He therefore put on his uniform and went out with Charles Henri Sanson, who was supported by Charlemagne and another of his brothers. At this stage, I cannot do better than let my grandfather speak for himself and give his own version of the events which followed:

'The sacrifice is accomplished! . . . I started this morning at seven o'clock, after embracing my poor wife, whom I did not expect to see again. I took a fly with my brothers Charlemagne and Louis Martin. The crowd was so large in the streets that it was close upon nine o'clock before we reached the Place de la Révolution. Gros and Barré, my assistants, had erected the guillotine, and I was so persuaded that it would not be used that I hardly looked at it. My brothers were well armed, and so was I; under our coats we had, besides our swords, daggers, four pistols, and a flask of powder, and our pockets were full of bullets. We felt sure that some attempt would be made to rescue the King, and we intended, if we could, to assist in saving his life.

'When we reached the Place I looked about for

my son, and I discovered him at a short distance with his battalion. He nodded, and seemed to encourage me. I listened intently for some indication as to what was about to occur. I rejoiced at the thought that the King had perhaps been rescued on the way, and that he was already beyond the reach of danger. As, however, my eyes were bent in the direction of the Madeleine, I suddenly espied a body of cavalry which was coming up at a trot, and, immediately after it, a carriage drawn by two horses and surrounded by a double row of horsemen followed. No doubt could now exist; the victim was at hand. My sight became dim, and I looked at my son; he also was deadly pale.

'The carriage stopped at the foot of the scaffold. The King was sitting on the back seat on the right; next to him was his confessor, and on the front seat two gendarmes. The latter came down first; then the priest stepped out, and he was directly followed by the King, who appeared even more collected and calm than when I saw him at Versailles and in the Tuileries.

'As he approached the steps of the scaffold I cast a last glance around. The people were silent, the drums were sounding, and not the slightest sign of a rescue being at hand was given. Charlemagne was as troubled as I was; as to my brother Martin, he was younger and had more firmness. He advanced respectfully, took off his hat, and told the King that he must take his coat off.

'"There is no necessity," answered he; "despatch me as I am now."

'My brother insisted, and added that it was indispensably necessary to bind his hands.

'This last observation moved him greatly. He reddened, and exclaimed, "What! would you dare to touch me? Here is my coat, but do not lay a finger on me!"

'After saying this he took off his coat. Charlemagne came to Martin's assistance, and, scarcely knowing how to address the illustrious victim, he said in a cold tone, which could hardly conceal his profound emotion, "It is absolutely necessary. The execution cannot proceed otherwise."

'In my turn I interfered, and bending to the ear of the priest, "Monsieur l'Abbé," I said, "ask the King to submit. While I tie his hands we can gain time, and perhaps some assistance may be forthcoming."

'The abbé looked sadly and eagerly in my face, and then addressing the King: "Sire," said he, "submit to this last sacrifice, which shall make you look more like our Saviour."

'The King held out his hands, while his confessor was presenting a crucifix to his lips. Two assistants tied the hands which had wielded a sceptre. He then ascended the steps of the scaffold, supported by the worthy priest. "Are these drums going to sound for ever?" he said to Charlemagne. On reaching the platform, he advanced to the side where the crowd was the thickest, and made such an imperative sign that the drummers stopped for a moment.

'"Frenchmen!" he exclaimed, in a strong voice,

"you see your King ready to die for you. May my blood cement your happiness! I die innocent of what I am charged with!"

'He was about to continue when Santerre, who was at the head of his staff, ordered the drummers to beat, and nothing more could be heard.

'In a moment he was bound to the weigh-plank, and a few seconds afterwards, while under my touch the knife was sliding down, he could still hear the voice of the priest pronouncing these words:

'"Son of Saint-Louis, ascend to Heaven!"

'Thus died the unfortunate prince, who might have been saved by a thousand well armed men; and really I am at loss to understand the notice which I received the day before the execution, that some attempt at rescue was to be made. The slightest signal would have been sufficient to cause a diversion in his favour; for if when Gros, my assistant, showed the King's head to the multitude some cries of triumph were uttered, the greater part of the crowd turned away with profound horror.'

Such is the account which my grandfather left us of the death of Louis XVI. It is in conformity with the letter which he had the courage to write to the 'Thermomètre du Jour,' to correct some erroneous allegations contained in that paper.

The narrative I have just given essentially differs from that of M. de Lamartine in his 'Histoire des Girondins;' but, however great may be the authority of the eminent historian, his account cannot, for accuracy,

be compared with my grandfather's. He has seen fit to represent Charles Henri as speaking contemptuously to the King, and even raising his hand to strike him. This is a gross fabrication, and I need not take the trouble to show its absurdity.

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